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MASTER ARDICK, BUCCANEER

MASTER ARDICK BUCCANEER

BY

F. H. COSTELLO

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CONTENTS.

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	Of my becoming a seafaring man	1
II.	Of the brush with the black ship	19
III.	Of the course of events till we were finally south bound	32
IV.	Of the moving talk of the young sailor, and the strange behaviour of an old one	39
V.	Of a very stirring piece of business	50
VI.	Of the stand that we made, and divers events that followed	60
VII.	Of the great strait we found ourselves in, and how that subtle rogue, the mate, seemed still to triumph	75
VIII.	Of the mockery of the ship, and the rescuer that finally came	84
IX.	Of our reception on the Spanish ship	96
X.	Of our new quarters and the people of the ship	103
XI.	Of the audacious buccaneer	112
XII.	Of the carrying out of our scheme	125
XIII.	Of a mysterious decree of fate	132
XIV.	Of the doing on the buccaneer	138
XV.	Of the bargain with Pradey	147
XVI.	Of the brave news at Chagre	155
XVII.	Of things ashore	161
XVIII.	Of the coming of Morgan and the departure for Panama	169
XIX.	Of the things we endured till we came to the eve of battle	173

CHAPTER PAGE

XX.—Of the opening of the battle 181

XXI.—Of the conclusion of my adventure and the fall of the city. Likewise of the strange thing that happened thereafter. 191

XXII.—Of the conclusion of our great surprise, and what followed at the heels of it 201

XXIII.—Of the flight of the don and his party, and the dilemma that Captain Towland put us in. Likewise of a dreadful discovery 213

XXIV.—Of the things that Paul Cradde told us, together with the conception of a daring plan . . . 222

XXV.—Of the progress of our plan 231

XXVI.—Of our further good fortune 237

XXVII.—Of our voyage in the boat and the danger that finally threatened us 251

XXVIII.—Of the fight with the boat's people 261

XXIX.—Of the end of our desperate fight. 269

XXX.—Of the strange and excellent mending of our fortunes 276

XXXI.—Of two important interviews 290

XXXII.—Of the determination of the whole matter . . 304

PAGE
. . 181
fall of
g that
. . 191
l what
. . 201
nd the
is in.
. . 213
gether
. . 222
. . 231
. . 237
r that
. 251
. 261
. 269
r for-
. 276
. 290
. 304

MASTER ARDICK, BUCCANEER.

CHAPTER I.

OF MY BECOMING A SEAFARING MAN.

I WAS born in the days of the Lord Protector, so that I was a little past my majority when the things that I have in mind to relate took place. At that time the second Charles was on the throne, and we were dancing to the fiddle of the great Louis, which was the reason we had been drawn into a war with the Dutch, and had thrown over the Triple Alliance. My father was a sea captain, out of Portsmouth for the Mediterranean, and was killed by the Barbary pirates and his ship taken a little time before I came of age. My mother grieved sorely for him, and only survived his loss a few months, and my two young brothers being then put out with a reputable haberdasher, and the little that remained of our fortune turned over to him for their benefit, I found myself of a sudden alone in the world, and brought, for the first time, to depend upon myself for a living. I had made a few voyages with my father, and had come to be something of a seaman, though I knew scarce anything of navigation, and this knowledge, with what I had gained from an ordinary round of school-

ing, stood for all I was now to reckon on to make my way in the world. While I was reflecting on my condition, and casting about to see what I should do —for I did not relish the idea of using the sea, though that was now often in my mind—I chanced to fall in with a certain shipmaster, Daniel Houthwick by name, to whom, after a short acquaintance, I disclosed my case, and asked his advice. We were seated in the taproom of one of the little dock inns at the time, with a pot of old October before us and no one just by. The captain took a pull at his mug, which made his hairy throat give a great throb, and after a little deliberation answered:

"I should be blithe to help you, Master Ardick, could I but get my bearings to see how. You know I am an old salt-water, with little run of things ashore. I might come at something by broad reckoning, but no better."

"Give me that," said I eagerly. "Anything is better than beating about all ways in the wind."

"Well, then," he began, to make a start, "how is it with a trade?"

"I have a poor turn for any that I know of," I answered. "Besides, I am now too old to go into indentures, and have no money to buy an entrance."

"Yet that might be managed," he replied; "but I could not, for your sake, advise it. An unwilling workman at any business is in a poor way. Would it suit you to enter the employ of a merchant? I think I know of one who might be induced to receive you."

"I heartily thank you," I said with some embarrassment, "but in sooth I fear I should make my way but slowly at that calling."

I feared that he might take these refusals rather ill, but it seemed not. He only hesitated a little, as though giving the matter further thought.

"Then how say you," he finally began, "to taking up with the sea? I will not deny that it is a hard life, and I mistrust you do not incline to it, yet I think there be worse callings. Moreover, your father followed it, and I conceive you must have been born with some natural fitness for it. These things do not out of the blood in one generation. Have you, then, so much salt water in your veins as will overbear the objections?"

I hung in the wind a little, for this was the very thing I would not have, yet I was slow to add still another refusal. At last I answered:

"I have indeed salt water in my veins, which is to say I like the sea, yet I have a scruple concerning a sailor's life, and thus far have not learned sufficient to overcome it."

He regarded me with attention while I was speaking, and when I had made an end smiled and was silent for a moment.

"It is as I guessed," he then went on to answer. "Well, and I am willing to concede you three parts right. Yet how if there offered some opportunity for advancement—I mean without waiting half a lifetime?"

"Why, in that case," I answered, not quite sure what he would be at, "the matter would stand in another light."

He nodded, and leisurely helped himself to more liquor.

"Look you," he said, rounding upon me then and speaking in a brisker tone than he had before, "I have a mind to make you a proposition. I am in want of a second mate. So we can agree upon terms, what say you to the place? It is a little better beginning than a bare berth before the mast, with the chance of betterment."

I could see the thing closing in upon me, as it were, yet hardly knew how to evade it, and, on the whole, began to care less to do so. "Well, captain," I finally answered, "I can not see why I should decline such a kindly and timely offer. I agree, providing that I am able to fulfil all your requirements, which I somewhat doubt, seeing that my experience has been but brief."

"We will take care of that," he said with a confident air. "When will you board me, that you may determine whether you like the ship?"

"When you will," I answered, beginning now to conceive a liking for the venture, and dreading a little that I should not wholly suit him. "You will examine me in some sort, as to my fitness?" I went on to ask. "I care not, neither for my sake nor yours, to miscarry in the matter."

"Nay, never concern yourself as to that," he answered lightly. "I do not expect wonders of you."

"Yet you must come to an assurance," I persisted.

"Never fear," he laughed. "I am not one to buy a pig in a poke."

I was compelled to be satisfied with this, or at least with the idea, though I thought the figure might have been improved.

"Then since you are ready," he said, rising, "let us be off."

He called for the score, which he insisted upon paying, and we left the inn. There was a good deal of confusion along the docks, for several of the king's ships were fitting for sea, and the running about and pulling and hauling, all without much method or precision, were surprising and perplexing, but at last we reached the jetty where the captain's boat was lying. On the way it suddenly occurred to me that I had neglected to ask a pretty important question, which was the port that the Industry—the captain's ship—was bound for. I asked it now, and learned that it was Havana, in the West Indies. This suited me very well, as I had never been in those parts, and had a young fellow's fondness for novelty. We boarded the gig, which a middle-aged sailor was keeping, and were soon clear of the tangle of shipping about the docks, and standing into the roadstead. I suspected that one of three large vessels that were at anchor some little distance out might be the Industry, and accordingly asked the captain.

"Ay, quite right," he answered, pointing to the easternmost of the ships. "There she is."

There was a dazzle on the water in that direction, and I could not get so perfect a view of her as I desired, but nevertheless I was able to judge her chief features. She stood pretty well out of the water (considering that she was loaded), and, while she had

a good beam, was not overround in the bows, and was well and loftily sparred. She was painted black, with a gilded streak, and showed no break for ports, which, indeed, was not surprising, as few merchantmen at that time carried their guns otherwise than on deck. All her tops seemed to be provided with shields, or barricadoes, and on the poop and along the bulwarks I could resolve the outlines of several sakers and swivels. Besides these I thought she might carry some heavy piece, and, in fact, I caught a glimpse, through an open gang-port, of a shape in a tarpaulin which could hardly be other than a long-range gun. The whole appeared to show that she was fitted to fight as well as to fly, which was passing needful in those troublous times. Her burthen (as I afterward learned) was three hundred and fifty tons, and as we approached her, and she flashed up her great black side, she looked even larger. As we drew near, some heads showed above the bulwark, and I made out a ladder hanging over at that place. We pulled up to it, and when we rose on the next wave the sailor reached out a boat-hook and steadied us to it, and we were speedily up the side. When I came to reach the deck I found more hands behind the bulwark than I had supposed, for just here it was too tall for a short man to see over, and it struck me that a more than ordinary proportion of the fellows were undersized. However, they looked well enough, take them faces, expressions and all, and I was instantly brought back to old times at sight of the sea-pickled countenances, as they fetched about from the rail, and hitched their breeches and watched us expectantly. I readily guessed that the

captain had dropped out here, after stowing his cargo, on purpose to hold his crew, well knowing the weaknesses which poor Jack is prone to, and not relishing a set of hands shipped at the last moment (for the greater part lugged aboard helplessly drunk) by extortionate crimps.

As I glanced about, taking in the fashion of the deck and such arrangements as had not been visible from the water, a short, broad man, in a kind of Dutch blouse and heavy sea boots, came from some place forward and accosted the captain. I inferred that he must be the mate, and so, indeed, it proved, and upon being presented I found his name was Giles Sellinger, and that he hailed from Southampton. He had a resolute, honest-looking countenance, albeit the smallpox had pitted him rather severely, and I thought had the air of a good seaman and competent officer. The captain explained the meaning of my being aboard, and said that he doubted not I should suit them well, though it might be I should halt in some things at the beginning. Master Sellinger received this explanation in a way favourable to my pride, for he presently commended the idea, and when this had passed the captain led me about the ship, taking me first to the cabin, which was a plainly furnished berth reached by a door set its whole height in the face of the poop, and thence had me along 'tween decks to the storerooms and forecastle. The whole suited me well, for she seemed a stout, clean craft with everything as it should be, and I was now only concerned lest I should not fulfil all the captain's requirements, and make one of the company. This kept me in some suspense, which, as

it seemed to me, he did not at all share, either for my sake or his own. Shortly after this we left the forecastle and passed aft. When we had reached the hooded gun—for such the object under the tarpaulin proved to be—he stopped and pulled the covering a little aside, that I might admire the handsome fashion of the piece, and the admirable, clean way it was kept. Its brass barrel, indeed, shone like a new sovereign, and under different circumstances I should have bestowed considerable attention and admiration upon it, but just now my mind was too full of other things. Perhaps he perceived my abstraction, for he presently put the tarpaulin back, and turned to me with his former brisk air of business.

"Well, Master Ardick, now that the civilities are over—and I trust that you like the ship—we will to the concerns which bring you here. First attend, and I will propound to you some questions in seamanship."

"That suits me well," I replied. "I hope the answers will serve, for truly I like your ship, and shall esteem myself lucky to go in her."

"Then hearken," with which he proceeded to ply me with a number of nautical questions. I will not give them here, as they are not to the purpose, but the wind-up was that I was able to satisfy him, and he declared that he was ready to sign me, the concern of wages alone standing to be settled. It will be guessed that I did not allow that matter to divide us, and in less than ten minutes more I was on the books as second mate of the Industry. It was arranged that I should return at once with the captain and order my few affairs, and be fetched away

again when he came, which would be about the middle of the afternoon. It seemed that he had the supercargo to bring off, with some other important business, so could not be ready any speedier. We were to sail as soon following as the wind served. This by the signs would be before long, a hard, streaked sky already showing in the southeast, and the colours at the maintop-mast head snapping out at intervals toward the west.

We made no further delay, but returned to the town, and at the hour appointed to be fetched off I was ready, clothes-bag in hand. The tide had fallen since morning, and I had to walk to the edge of the jetty before I could espy the boat, which I then perceived at the foot of the long flight of wet steps. The two sailors, who were the crew, were alone in her, and so I saw that I was beforehand with my companions. The sun poured down not on the open jetty, and I went down to the boat, which was in the shade, greatly relishing the cold, sea smell of the barnacled spiles on the way, which, indeed, at that moment brought back a little clear thought of my boyhood. I had loved to hang about such places, gratifying the passion for the ocean and all its belongings which I suppose was born in me, and in a way fitting myself, by this close touch with sea things, for the life that Fate was preparing for me.

I waited a few moments, talking with the sailors (but not too freely, lest they conceive me of an easy sort, which would not do), and presently I heard the voice of the captain. He was a large, heavy-chested man, with tones to match, and I doubt not I began to hear him as soon as he set foot on the jetty, but

at the moment I could not distinguish any voice in answer. The sailors pushed the boat more fairly to the foot of the stairs, and directly the captain appeared at the top.

"Aye, Master Ardick is here," I heard him say back to some one behind him, and almost with the words the person he had addressed joined him. The supercargo, for such, of course, the second man was, I found to be a nimble, erect little gentleman, in age perhaps sixty, with some gray in his beard, but a good fresh skin, and dressed very handsomely in sad-coloured velvet, low-crowned hat with feathers, yellow hose, and high-heeled French shoes, with blue rosettes. His head was covered with a fashionable flowing wig, and his broad sword-belt supported a good substantial sword with a silver hilt. He came actively down the steps beside the captain, and when the latter had greeted me and passed the supercargo on to the stern sheets, the men shoved off and shipped their oars.

As soon as Captain Houthwick had put us on our course he presented me to the supercargo, giving his name as Mr. Tym, and informing him with some little pride that he would find me other than the common sort of sailor, being a man of considerable parts and of a family above the ordinary, my father having been an owning shipmaster and the son of a justice of the peace, and my mother the daughter of a knight.

I was surprised that these little matters had stuck so shrewdly in the captain's memory, as he had not seemed to be a person to be impressed by things of the kind, but I could not feel very sorry, both

from a little pride which his explanation gratified, and because I saw that the supercargo seemed to treat the matter with respect and attention. Not much passed on the way to the ship, and after a somewhat tedious pull, the wind being in part contrary and quite a sea beginning to run, we drew near, and I got up and made ready to seize the ladder. It was of rope, with wooden rungs, the top and bottom made fast, and presently I succeeded in catching it, and drew the bow of the boat as near as was safe. The ship rose and sank and churned about in a troublesome fashion, but I managed to hold on, and first the captain and then Mr. Tym passed me and swung over to the ladder. The old supercargo was as steady and sure-footed as a rope-dancer, and it immediately occurred to me that he might be a veteran seagoer, a conclusion which was confirmed as I saw how coolly he waited on the ladder till the captain was out of the way, though the ship was rolling and pitching and sending frothing flings of water up to the very soles of his dainty shoes. In a moment the captain had passed over the bulwark, and Mr. Tym began to follow, and it was then that I made a surprising discovery. I had noticed that the old fellow had kept his cloak partly about him, and I had marvelled at it, as the day was so warm, but now, as he began to climb, the wind caught the garment and blew it out, and behold, he had lost his left hand! The sleeve hung loose and long about the wrist, and out from the drapery—showing queer among the lace—peeped the black turn of an iron hook. He caught this over the rungs of the ladder, alternating with his right hand,

and without any difficulty mounted the unsteady side and swung himself lightly over the bulwark. I watched him in a kind of fascination, but he was quickly up, with his agile, deft movements, and after that I had something else to think of. This lively breeze was a fair one for our sails, and we must all needs look alive, and walk up the anchor and get the Industry under canvas. The two sailors passed the boat astern, and we run it up to the davits, and then I went forward and stood ready to catch the mate's word and start the good ship on her travels.

The captain mounted the poop, a man was sent to the tiller,* and the mate stationed himself just abaft the forecastle to pass the word along.

"Heave her short!" shouted the captain. "Heave her short!" repeated the mate, and the pawls of the windlass began to rattle.

"Loosen sail!" followed, and the men sprang into the rigging. Everything was cleared to let go, and all hands, except a man on each yard to stay the bunt, scampered back to the deck.

"All ready aloft?" hailed the mate. "All ready!" answered the fellows on the yards.

"Let go!" and the ship flashed out white, and stood clothed in the waves of loose canvas. Then the chief topsails were set, the yards trimmed, and the anchor finally brought to a head. She steadied quickly to her work, and as she climbed away the light canvas was rapidly put out.

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* The wheel, as a steering apparatus, was the invention of a later day.

I had experienced some small anxiety till all this had passed, for of course my berth was strange to me, and I knew that I should be watched. Haply all had gone well, and I could now breathe freer. One thing that made greatly for me was that I excelled in work aloft. In good sooth, I had an excellent, steady nerve and sure eye, and I took care to secure the posts which would show off these qualities, knowing well that they would advance me with the men, and that without them I should speedily fall into contempt and in the end be in a most unhappy case. A good start being thus made, I walked aft—that is, as far as the mainmast—and took a brisk turn or two to let the captain see that I would be in his sight and a-stirring. In a short time the watches were appointed, and the business of putting the ship in order and other like things of the beginning of a voyage attended to, and after that I had a little breathing space and slipped down to my cabin. I had a small berth in the aftermost part of the 'tween-decks, and here I found my clothes-bag and other effects, and proceeded to sling a hammock (preferring it to either of the bunks the berth contained), and sat down to have a brief smoke. I was already enough of a sailor to set considerable store by my pipe, though I was not of those who will be having the clay between their teeth almost from morning till night. In fact, I had not run to any dissipations, which was doubtless one reason why, though I had grown to man's stature—indeed, a little beyond the average stature—I had still the rosy skin and clear eyes of a boy, and, with a rather slim figure, had the downright strength of a mature

and able man. Moreover, I was active, too, in those days, not a young fellow in Portsmouth fleeter of foot, and few, if any, that could lay me on my back in a bout of wrestling. I was not ill-looking either —to follow this business of limning me to a conclusion—for I had good features and sound white teeth, and my eyes were bright and dark and matched my brown, wavy hair. My beard had not fairly begun to grow, being backward, and I kept what there was closely shaven, by this no doubt adding to my boyish look. My hair I wore short and brushed plainly back, not being of means or station, and indeed not of inclination, to wear a wig, and my dress consisted of a soft cap, rough gray short-coat, gray smalls, plain brown hose, and stout shoes.

My smoke over, I strolled for a bit into the forecastle, and then went again on deck, where I found the wind rather gathering strength and quite a stiff sea running. We reefed the topsails, and by that time supper was called. The rest of the evening passed without incident. I turned in early, as my watch was to be called at eight bells, and, when the time came, crawled out mighty sleepy, but full of zeal, and so kept my four hours. At daylight all hands had to be called, as there was a heavy wind, which was verging on half a gale, and we whipped down the mainsail and the great lateen, and before we were done had to be satisfied with a reefed main topsail, a bit of foresail, and a reefed sprit-topsail. Thus snugged down, we dinned along, the wind now nearly ahead, and we laying up to it the best we were able, but with a vast deal of labour and ado. Indeed, there was a constant wild upheaving and

awesome plunging down, while tons of water, crowned white as milk with froth, would flood all forward and race aft almost to the quarter-deck. The sky was now nearly sheathed in gray, with a murkiness in the southwest, and the wind came in heavy, lowering gusts, threatening even our scant canvas, though as yet both that and the spars stood the strain very sturdily.

"Marry, but this is something boisterous for the narrow seas," said a high-pitched voice behind me, as I stood holding on by the lashings of the big gun and watching the turmoil.

I turned and saw the little supercargo, who had just come up out of the cabin. He was balancing himself fearlessly on his straddled legs, a long sea-coat whipping about him, and his hand clapped upon his hat to keep both that and his great curly wig from blowing away.

"Best step along here, sir!" I shouted, fearful lest the next lurch of the ship should carry him off his feet, and at least bruise him against the bulwark.

He racked along to me then, but slowly and deliberately, as though he felt no fear.

"Aye, sir," I said, as he reached me, now replying to his question, "this is rough weather for the Channel."

"I saw worse once!" he shouted, with a kind of chuckle, and then immediately sucking in his lips, which I found was a way he had.

"And how was that?" I asked, willing to forget the weather for a moment if I could.

"Why, it was a matter of above twenty years ago," he replied. "Things so fell out with me on

that occasion that I put to sea on a day even worse than this in only a small fishing sloop."

"It was beyond account rash," I commented. "It must have been a strait, indeed, to bring you to it."

"It was to save my neck," he answered, speaking this time close to my ear, that he might talk with less strain. "You see, it was in the days of old Noll, and I had ventured into my native Sussex—I had forgotten to say that the old tyrant had set a price on my head—and was forced to get speedily out. Luckily, a fellow-Royalist was at hand and lent me a horse, and on that I reached the seaside and thence boarded this fisherman, upon which I put out, as I said. Yes, it was a wild bit of a cruise, and the craft was none too stiff and firm in her timbers, either."

"But the master of her," I queried, a little puzzled by that point in the story, "how did you prevail on him to take such a risk?"

"How? Why, to be sure, with a pistol at the head. He would listen no otherwise."

"And the crew? Had you no trouble with them?"

"Nay, not a whit. I did but point another pistol at them—I had two hands in those days—and they became most tractable."

"You deserved to escape!" I cried admiringly. "But what then? Did you come to close straits before you made the other side?"

"Yes," he answered, shaking his head, "and at last we had to cut away the mast. It is too long to dwell upon, but the wind-up was we finally made France. It was hard by Calais, and we had started

from Eastbourne. There was much tedious pumping to do, and right slow progress under such sail as we could put upon a jury-mast."

"Lost you your hand in the wars?" I inquired, thinking that he would take no offence at that question, seeing that he had been so communicative already.

"Aye, at Worcester," he answered, his countenance sobering a little. "I was of those who strove to cover the king's retreat, and did, for the time, beat back the enemy. A crop-crown finally sheared away the greater part of my hand, so that I was compelled to retire. I lingered only long enough to pistol the man and exchange horses with him, mine being well-nigh spent."

"Surely the king rewarded such zeal and valour as it deserved," I said with warmth.

He frowned. "Nay, I like not to talk of that. I am a king's man and shall be till I die. His Majesty has many calls upon his favour, and can not be bounteous to all. Let us say I have come by a little estate, a part whereof is invested in this ship, and, having neither family nor kin, choose to follow my money with my time, and so you behold Mr. Supercargo. Is not that a sail out yonder?" He broke off, and pointed to a white speck on the northwestern seaboard, which hung with such steadiness that I soon decided that it was, indeed, a sail. It was nothing surprising or unexpected, of course, here in the Channel, and I gave no more heed to it at the time. Mr. Tym shortly retired again to the cabin, and the hard weltering of the ship through the heavy seas went on. The forenoon wore away, and it was

about seven bells when, happening to think of the sail I had seen, I went to the rail to look for it. It was now about on the lee bow, and much nearer, and soon I could make out a large ship closehauled on the starboard tack. She was carrying about the same canvas as the Industry, which was, indeed, all that a prudent captain would venture in such a wind. I continued to watch her, and presently I saw that she had altered her course and was now standing directly toward us. This gave her a beam wind, and, though she immediately reduced sail a little further, she was unable to put the seas well under her, and rolled and thrashed heavily along. I conceived it would have been better seamanship to fetch her head a little more to the south, and as this thought occurred to me I happened to glance toward the poop where the captain and mate were standing, and saw that the skipper was pulling out and pointing his glass. He took a long observation, and then, to my surprise, shook his head energetically and passed the glass to the mate. Sellinger looked in turn, and almost at once lowered the instrument and began bawling something in the captain's ear. Houthwick answered by a nod, and turned sharply and ran a little way aft. He gave a command—I could not tell what—to the man at the helm, and rapidly returned and descended the poop ladder. The mate followed, stopping at the bottom to hang the glass in some beckets, and came to the confines of the quarter-deck. Houthwick, on the other hand, turned short at the companion, which he opened, and from a strap just inside took out his trumpet. He made no stop, but skurried out to the ladder again, and

went up with long, eager strides, the pace faster than I had ever observed him use before. He was not yet at the top when the mate roared to me, using his hand to guide the sound:

"Call all hands!"

CHAPTER II.

OF THE BRUSH WITH THE BLACK SHIP.

I PLUNGED off to the forecastle, seizing a handspike as I went. Thundering on the hatch, and then opening it, I roared down:

"All hands ahoy! Look alive!" In an instant there was a bouncing out of bunks and hammocks, and a rush up the hatch. The fellows popped out in quick succession, and in a flash the entire crew was ranged on deck.

"To the braces!" shouted the captain through the trumpet. "All ready to slack and haul! Some of you forward to tend spritsail!"

These orders, taken up by the mate, as the yelling of the wind drowned in part even the bellowing of the trumpet, were rapidly obeyed, and the crew scrambled to their stations and stood ready.

"Down helm!" was shouted back to the two fellows at the tiller. The ship's head began to fall off, and as it did so the orders to handle the braces followed. In a mere matter of moments, so fast did the men work—urged on, indeed, by the knowledge that there was some unusual stress, though as yet they understood imperfectly the cause—in that few mo-

ments the last order was carried out, and the ship's head now pointed due north. I had kept an eye on the stranger's movements while we were fetching the Industry upon the new course, and was not greatly surprised, on casting my eye that way, to see the broad bows suddenly fall away from the wind, and the long black side begin to show. At the same moment her yards flew round, and thus she too was pointed north. There could be but one explanation of this last action—the stranger meant to overhaul us. I was now burning to get speech with the captain or Sellinger, that I might resolve something more certain out of this stirring business; but for the present they were busied with other matters, so that I did not like to seek them. By this time the other ship was near enough to enable me to make out some features of her build and rig, though as yet no small details. She was apparently about a fourth larger than the Industry, and was proportionally broader in the bows and higher in the stern. Her masts seemed relatively shorter, and had a sort of stumpy look, though there was a great show of long yards and of space for cloth on the boltsprit spars.* She was painted black, and at this distance I could make out no ports, so that if she were really a war craft, as I now began to think, she must have her guns blinded, a trick not seldom practised by cruisers in those days. As for her speed, which all on the Industry must be now trying to guess, there had been as yet no conclusive test of it, though up to this time she

* That is, those spars on the boltsprit, as it was then called, which carried the sprit-sails.

had discovered no more than we could show. I made all these observations in one or two careful glances, and the question now was what was her purpose and why was she pursuing us? The readiest answer to be come at was that she was Dutch, and was making a flying cruise of it in the Channel. If so, she should be both faster and stronger than she looked, for it would be a bold thing, indeed, for a mere wagon of a merchant rigger, without broadside guns and having no near friendly port for refuge, thus to seek prizes in our narrow seas. While I was turning these matters over in my mind, taking care to keep an eye out aft, the while, to be in readiness for sudden orders, the companion opened and the supercargo again appeared. The mate was standing near by, and Mr. Tym at once went over to him, and, by his expression and some words which the wind took to me, desired to know what had happened. This was the very thing I would have, for now, without pushing myself into their counsels, I could slip a little nearer, and be made acquainted with the whole matter. I did this, advancing from where I had been standing to the weather rail, just abreast of the great gun, and there feigned to be watching the doings of the other ship.

"Ay, a Dutchman, fast enough," the supercargo was saying. "A daring fellow, too, and not to be lightly shaken off, I fancy. Will it do to set a bit more sail?"

"It would not be profitable," the mate answered. "She is doing what she can with this strength of wind. By the breaking of the clouds yonder, it will presently quiet a bit, and then we will see what can

be done. You observe that we hold our own with the fellow at present, and carry as much as he does."

"Yes," said the supercargo, "I perceive that."

"We will make a race with him for the coast," pursued the mate, "and it will go hard with us if we do not give him a shrewd brush."

"How far might it be? Surely twenty miles."

"Call it a bit more. Say five-and-twenty. We could make that by nightfall."

"True," said Mr. Tym with a satisfied nod, "and if he should overhaul us on this course we could try a bowline."

A long slide of the ship, which swung me about and made me shift my place, lost me the beginning of the mate's reply. When I could hear again he was saying:

"If he should crawl near enough. We saw four on deck—none, it is true, larger than sakers; but there is a kind of house just abaft the foremast,* and that may be a cover for two or three large pieces."

"Then fighting will hardly serve," said the supercargo reflectively. "Well, let us see how clean a pair of heels we can show. I will take the glass and have a look at the fellow. His audacity has something of charm in it, though I own it might fade upon a closer acquaintance."

He strode off to where the glass hung (the captain had brought up another, which he was using from the poop), and when he had fetched it to the

* The forecastle house, or topgallant forecastle, was rare, if not unknown, in ships of that date.

rail he climbed upon a coil of line and brought it to bear. I followed the observation with my eye, and saw that the Dutch ship (for such I could not now doubt that she was) was keeping the same relative place, not gaining, but storming along in a heavy, dogged way, her white flash of canvas showing in a narrow streak as we caught the slant of it, and her black side riding up huge and imposing.

The supercargo used the glass for some time, but finally put it by, and went up to have a talk with the captain. Of course I could not hear what they said, but it was easy to guess that it must be about the present strait. In a few moments the captain came to the verge of the poop and called the mate. Master Sellinger hurried up the ladder, and the three men talked together earnestly. The mate then came down again, and immediately the captain walked to the colour halyards, and with his own hands ran up the flag. As it blew out at the mizzen truck the crew, who, as well as myself, were watching anxiously and curiously the doings aft, broke into a cheer. All eyes were now on the stranger, for this was a clear demand that he should declare his intentions. It was the most stirring moment thus far since the chase—or race, if you please—had begun. The long black mass rose on the next crest, and slid foaming down into the valley, and again soared and fell. How we watched her! Lift, lift, she rose, uptilted her great house of a stern, and plunged, with the shock of the parted seas, down the declivity, and all swiftly and mightily rode to the top again, and still not a handkerchief's breadth of bunting! Five, and at last ten minutes, and the same monotonous

upride and tilt and fall. The captain stood with straddled legs, silently using his telescope, and the mate was in the mizzen shrouds scanning the foe under the pent house of his hand. The supercargo leaned over the poop rail, holding on hat and wig, and the rest of us lined the weather bulwark, in the waist. Of a sudden the captain lowered his glass and shut it up. The supercargo turned, catching the action, and they came together and exchanged a few words.

"The thing is fetched to a head," said a sailor at my elbow, with an excited pull at his waistband.

"You would have it that the stranger's no answer is answer enough?" I inquired, willing to get the fellow's opinion, for he was an old salt-water, and had a look of some wit, besides.

"Ay, Master Ardick," he replied, with an emphatic bob of his head, "the thing is settled, as sure as my name is Jack Lewson. That fellow would swallow us, bones and all."

He had scarce spoken when Houthwick left Mr. Tym and stepped briskly to the head of the poop ladder.

"Master Sellinger, set the mainsail and reef it. Take out one reef in the foresail."

The mate was off his perch to the deck in an instant, and at his word the men flew to their stations. The wind had less weight now than formerly, and blew steadier, but for all that I apprehended that we were taking considerable hazard to thus swell our canvas. Yet very quickly the thing was done, and under the added pressure the ship drove her nose into the smother, and made a strong lurching start

of it onward. While I was stepping back from the foot of the main shrouds, and in the act of directing one of the men to coil up a loose length of halyard, some one behind me gave a shout, and I turned to see that the dark ship was likewise whitening with added sail. I hurried over anxiously to the weather bulwark and mounted it, holding on by a shroud, and prepared to watch this great and hard test of the two ships' speed. The Dutch craft, too, as her new sail caught the wind, gave a swift plunge forward, and like us she was now swinging powerfully and gainfully ahead.

I looked up at our masts, anxious lest they might not stand the strain, or that some weak spar should give way, but so far all held on stanchly. Yet surely it was wild work, and a strain upon the mind if not upon the ship. The canvas was filled as hard as wood, and gave out a low roar to the accompaniment of the harping of the guys and sheets and braces, and the din and pounding of the chasing after-seas.

On we raced, and it must have been that the greater part of an hour went by. So far the Dutchman and we were rarely well matched, he driving along at the same point off our beam, as though he might be our shadow. But a change was at hand. All in a moment, as it seemed, his long bulk began to narrow, the small slant of his sails that we could see expanded, and at once his pot-round bows rode, leaping and sinking, into view. He had changed his plan, and would fly straight at us.

In an instant the trumpet of Captain Houthwick began to bellow:

"Man braces! Down helm! Slack lee braces! Haul in on the weather! Aft here, some of you, and let out a reef in the lateen!"

It was clear what the skipper would be at. The cruiser, perceiving that he could not outsail us and cut us off, meant to close in and try to disable us with his guns. To prevent this we must turn tail and make a straight-away run of it. The question then to be settled was whether he could get near enough to wing us, by cutting up our spars and rigging. I thought this all out at a blink, as the Scotch say, for just at the moment I had to use my fingers rather than my brains. When I came in from the boltsprit, having gone there on some matter concerning the drawing of the sail, I found that the Dutchman was fair astern of us, only the slant of his sails catching the light, and the rest of him standing up round and black. I think something like two hours now passed, only one thing, but that an important one, happening, which was that the Dutchman slowly gained upon us. Twice Captain Houthwick altered sail, and once he increased it, but still the black fellow astern crept up. By this time the wind had considerably fallen, and hauled a point or two to the south. The captain called the mate to the poop and conferred briefly with him. The supercargo joined them, and I could see by their gestures and the uneasy way they stirred about as they talked that they were troubled to resolve their course. At last Houthwick said something to which the others appeared to assent, and the mate hurried off the poop. He espied me, as I stood by the main shrouds, and beckoned me to

him. When I came up he said low and in a strained, quick tone:

"The captain thinks we had best try a gun. I must serve it. Do you stand ready to help work the ship. Call the carpenter, and put him in charge of the magazine. The main hatch will have to be opened till they can get up the first supply of ammunition, after which batten it down again. The rest can come up the companion. Tell Spyglow that he can fetch out the arms chest and take the pikes from the beckets and pile them up. No harm to have things at hand. Stay! You may likewise get out the medicine chest, and set it in the open space 'tween-decks. That must serve as a cockpit, if any are hurt. Let the cook, who is something of a sawbones, go thither. The cabin boy can assist him. That will do for now, and look alive."

I said "Aye, aye!" in a seeming hearty voice (though, to own the truth, my heart was beginning to beat fast, and I felt a bit weak in the knees), and hurried away. In a few minutes all the orders were carried out, and the mate was free to try his experiment.

When I returned to the deck the gang-port had been unhooked, and the gun's canvas jacket taken off. Its handsome length was shining like gold, and its tompion was out, and the balls and powder ladles ordered for loading. An old sailor, by name Hob Dingsby, who had seen some service on a man-of-war, and a broad, strong Frenchman—one Pierre Lovigne—were standing by to assist the mate. I eagerly looked astern to see what had become of the foe, and there, to the quickening of my pulse, he

was, under a mile away. I could now make out the black dots of figures where the crew were overhanging the bows, and caught a glimpse—as I was almost sure—of two glistening objects, which could scarce be other than brass bow swivels. As I turned to see whether the mate was ready—I mean ready to have the ship luffed, so that he could secure his aim—I heard a low, dull boom, and, as I whirled again, a ball of smoke blew out from the bows of our pursuer and wreathed off to leeward.

"He's firing at the moon," said the mate contemptuously, and now I saw that the excitement had struck the colour from the man's cheeks, save for a little patch of red which showed under the sea-burn, and that his nerves were strung high and firm.

"At the gun!" called the captain from the poop. "Are you ready, Master Sellinger?"

"All ready, sir!"

"Then to the braces, men! Luff!" he roared back to the two fellows at the helm.

The ship came handsomely into the wind, and as she dipped to the bottom of a hollow the mate gave a swift glance along his gun and applied the linstock.

He had loaded while I was below, and I knew not what the charge was, but it must have contained a scatter-load, for I saw a tremendous dimple all over the water, just outside of the Dutchman's forefoot.

"A good beginning!" shouted the captain. "Have at him again!"

We got upon our course once more, and meantime the gun was reloaded.

"Ha! he's showing his teeth at last!" cried the

mate, pausing with his fuse, which he was blowing up, in his hand.

He pointed toward the enemy, and lo! two ports in the bows had opened, and in each was the round target spot which marked the muzzle of a gun.

"He has discovered that something besides swivels will be needed," said Mr. Tym, who had come, without our perceiving him, among us. "Nay, but he is about to give us the compliment of his whole broadside."

As he spoke we saw that the Dutchman's tall black bow was riding into the wind, and before thirty seconds more we caught a glimpse of four open and furnished ports. This was besides the bow piece, so that the fellow, after all, had declared himself to be a very pretty sort of a ten-gun cruiser. His ports were doubtless made to shut very tight, with lids, and so he had concealed his teeth, as the mate called them, till now. We began to rise on the crest, and every man held his breath.

A tremendous, crashing roar, and a sky full of smoke followed. I think I stooped, but I am not sure, and the next that comes clearly before me is that a great splinter, from somewhere overhead, struck the deck near me and gave a queer sort of elastic spring, and went overboard. I confess I jumped back, and as I did so I ground my heel upon something soft, and had to make another spring to prevent falling. By this time I had backed nearly to the quarter-deck, and, the smoke having now almost blown away, I leaned against the break of the deck and looked around. The spot where I had stumbled first arrested my eye, and there, rolled up almost in a

ball, lay the body of old Dingsby. His belt had burst with the strain of his doubling over, or perhaps was cut by the glancing of a fragment of shot, and it was slipping off him, almost giving him an air of unbuckling it from the front, his back being toward me. The mate and the Frenchman were standing up stiff and bold near the gun, and no one else had been hurt, that I could perceive.

The captain's figure broke through the passing cloud of smoke, coming from the helm, or some part aft, and pausing at the edge of the poop.

"On deck, there, how fares it?" he inquired, peering down. Then perceiving the body of the old man-o'-war's man, he answered his own question—"So they have slain poor Dingsby! Carry him a bit aside, some of you, and bestow him in a seemly sort. We will do better anon. What say you, Master Sellinger, have you a sharp word back?"

"Aye, aye, sir!" growled the mate. "Luff her, and I will give her a shrewd answer enough."

"Luff it is, then."

Something hastily, for there was little time for sentiment, two of the men bore aside the body of the old sailor, and the others sprang to the braces. Again we came into the wind, and again the mate sighted and applied his linstock. The smoke drifted astern, and I eagerly jumped into the shrouds and stared through the first clear opening. What was my delight when I saw the great bulk of the Dutchman sawing wildly into the wind, beating up a yeast of foam, and all a wreck forward, where his fore topmast and fore topgallant mast hung in a dreadful mess from the foremast head. The crew, seeing

how the thing had gone, burst into a roar of triumph, and the captain, from the poop, took off his cap and cheered. Even Mr. Tym, after clapping his iron hook to his head to secure the safety of his wig, plucked off his hat and waved it.

"Give 'em the small pieces now, Master Sellinger!" shouted the captain, as soon as this confusion had abated a little. "Let go those two sakers, while I pop at him with the swivels."

The mate hastily obeyed this order, and let drive with one saker after the other, while the captain set the small pieces a-roaring from above. All this while the Dutchman was in a great mess of getting before the wind again, but as yet without full success, though his crew could be seen swarming about the litter like bees. I do not think we accomplished anything with our small guns, and presently the order came to handle ship and fill away upon our old course.

We had got everything to drawing, and I had climbed upon the weather bulwarks, my mind very content, and casting looks of exultation at the floundering Dutchman, when, with very startling suddenness, a spit of fire darted along his cumbered foredeck, and a terrible whistling ball rushed close above my head. I distinctly felt the wind of it, and was off my perch, half tumbling, indeed, to the deck, in an instant.

As I steadied myself on my legs I heard a laugh above me, and on looking up saw Captain Houthwick standing at the top of the poop ladder. He shook his shaggy head at me, mighty amused, as it seemed, at the way I had rolled off the bulwark, and

as I looked up he said something in a kind of chuckling voice, and turned away. I had his tall, broad figure for an instant in my eye, and then came the boom as of another gun from the Dutchman, and before I could move or scarce think the captain took a long, sinking step backward, whirled, raced to the edge of the poop, and rounded down in a loose heap, one arm hanging over the verge.

CHAPTER III.

OF THE COURSE OF EVENTS TILL WE WERE FINALLY SOUTH BOUND.

SOME one behind me shouted, and there was a rush of the men and cries, and in the midst of it I saw the little supercargo dart from some place aft and raise the captain's head. I leaped to the poop ladder and flung myself up, and just as I did so one of the men left the tiller and came running forward.

"Back to your place!" I shouted. "You are not needed here."

I faced him till he saw I was in earnest and obeyed, and then I turned to the poor captain, with whom it had fared, indeed, after the worst. His lower face, save for the chaps, to which some beard hung, had been shot away, and he was a dead man, even before I had stopped to speak to the sailor.

"This is sorrowful business," said the supercargo, rising with a sigh, and covering the shattered face with his pocket handkerchief. "He was a brave man

and a true. Go you, Master Ardick, and fetch three of the hands, that we may carry the body below."

As he was speaking Master Sellinger, who must have waited a moment—as I suppose to quiet the men—sprang up the ladder, and I hurried to the deck. I summoned the three seamen, and with great tenderness we brought down Captain Houthwick's body, which we laid for the time on the quarter-deck, covering it with a tarpaulin. Then, when we had fetched poor Dingsby's body there also (for now the dignity of death had wrought in him, making him for the time of the same rank as the other, wherefore we laid them together)—when these things were attended to the mate dispatched us again forward, and for a little we gave our sole attention to the handling and better speeding of the ship. The Dutchman's crippled foremast continued to fret him, but he would not give over, and so for a time we both kept our course, though the Industry all the while made a small but steady gain. It might have been half an hour after this that Master Sellinger called me, and upon my responding said that he must now retire to the cabin for a little, the further disposition of the voyage standing to be settled, and that meanwhile I was to command the ship. With that, and upon my ascending to the quarter-deck, he made a sign to Mr. Tym and they both went below. (He that reads this must make allowance for a nautical term which here does not truly apply, though it comes ready for convenience, as in truth the cabin of the Industry was altogether on deck.)

Left in this fashion to myself, I presently conceived it in line with my business to take an obser-

vation of the chase, upon which I fetched the telescope and set the sights. Glasses did not magnify greatly in those days, but at last I got the fellow into the field, and when I had steadied the tremble could make out a number of things about him very clearly. He was now a good bit away, but I could easily perceive the crawling swarm of black dots upon his deck, which showed how full a crew he had now mustered, and I could likewise detect the glint of his two great foredeck guns. These had indeed been masked by the little hutch I had noticed, and had not been uncovered till a late stage of the pursuit. But a still more interesting and unexpected thing than this I discovered. From the fellow's main topgallant mast head * now floated the great Hollander flag. Whether in a manner of boast, to prove his boldness in venturing into our waters, or for what other motive the Dutchman had now displayed his ensign, I could not guess. There it was, and we might be sure that we had battled with a veritable Hans Butterbox, even had not his stumpy masts, dinner-pot bows, and other peculiarities of the build and rig of his ship betrayed him.

After a little Mr. Tym and the mate returned to the deck, their countenances, though sober, cleared, as I thought, as it might be they had settled their business to their minds.

They first devoted their attention for a brief space to the Dutchman, who was still by littles falling behind, though he had at last set some manner

* The most prominent point to display the colours. There were then no royal masts.

of fore topsail, and continued doggedly to follow us, and when this scrutiny was ended they walked over to where I was standing.

"Well, Master Ardick," began Mr. Tym, "doubtless you and the crew would by this time relish some information as to the future business of the voyage. Master Sellinger and I have taken counsel together, and think, please God, to go presently on with it. We shall stand forthwith into Sidmouth, where we hope to procure a first mate, which done, with Master Sellinger raised to be captain, we shall straightway fetch our course again for Havana."

I knew that Mr. Tym owned a considerable part of the ship, and doubted not that his plan would be approved of by the other owners, who were, indeed, venturing the voyage on their own account, not having put her under charter, and since his decision saved time, and seemed reasonable enough, I was not disposed to regret it, but was rather pleased with it. Yet of course my opinion was not sought, but merely my curiosity was vouchsafed to be satisfied, so I only bowed, and said that the decision would please the forecastle, as it did me, and with that I withdrew and went forward.

After a time the Industry's course was changed, and she was laid with her nose almost due north, and this she held as the Devonshire coast gradually rose and cut a clearer outline. By this time poor Hans Butterbox had become discouraged and given up the chase. Going upon the port tack he had shown us less and less of his great black bulk, till now, as we gradually rose the coast, he was about hull down.

I was beginning to be surprised that nothing had been done touching the disposal of the bodies of the captain and Dingsby, which were still extended on the quarter-deck, covered with the tarpaulins, but I was now to understand the reason of the delay and apparent neglect. Master—or I must now say Captain—Sellinger presently came to the confines of the quarter-deck, and, having called us before him, told us that it was Captain Houthwick's oft-expressed desire to be buried in the sea, which desire, he said, he had determined to comply with. As Dingsby was an old sailor, and was not known to have any family, it was the opinion of Mr. Tym and himself that it would be well and fitting to let his body accompany his old captain's. No one raised any opposition to this, or indeed struck in with a word, and so the sea burial for both these brave mariners was settled upon. Captain Houthwick, indeed, had neither wife nor children living, and no near kin, it was said, so there was the less to be complained of by any one that his own wishes were to be so scrupulously carried out. We sewed the two bodies up in their canvas shrouds, heavy weights were placed at their feet, and they were balanced on planks across the bulwark. All uncovered, and Mr. Tym read a prayer. As a rough voice or two joined in the amen, Captain Sellinger gave the signal and the bodies were shot into the water. The splashing they made was lost in the racing by of the next sea, and we solemnly drew in the bare planks and the doleful business was over. In the forecastle an auction was immediately held of the dead sailor's belongings, in this following the ancient sea custom,

and within an hour from his mournful slide into the deep his scanty wardrobe—all he had—was parted among his shipmates. So it was in the forecastle, and in the cabin we had something to the same purpose, for my Captain Sellinger stepped briskly into my late Captain Houthwick's shoes—in a figurative sense—and forthwith everything went on as before.

We ran into Sidmouth without trouble or delay, and when the anchor was cast Captain Sellinger ordered the gig, and was pulled ashore. He did not return till morning, and then fetched with him a stranger, whom he presently declared to us as the new mate. I immediately fell into some wonderment at the looks of this man. He was tall—taller by an inch than I—round-backed, gaunt, and marvellously old-looking in the face, though he could not have been above five-and-thirty. His hair was jet black and coarse, and there was scarce a thread of gray in it, despite that his countenance was so worn. He had little, fierce eyes and a great Roman nose, and his mouth—to conclude his picture—was wide, but fell in, and would seem to be often mumbling, owing to the loss of his teeth.

I could hardly conceive why Captain Sellinger should choose such a man, for it seemed to me that he must be harsh and of an ill temper, which the captain was not, and had never seemed to approve of. It soon came out that the port was almost bare of good seamen, as some were gone in the new fleet (of the king's), and others had shipped in the many vessels bound for America, so that a choice of mates, as the case stood, must needs be passing narrow. After all, this Master Pradey (such was his

name) had certain worthy people to recommend him, and it might be, notwithstanding his looks, that he would turn out well enough, and at least could be put up with.

We soon made sail, and after a time worked out from the coast and fetched our bows once more to the west. We kept a sharp lookout for suspicious craft, but saw no signs of any, and at last began to think that our bad luck was over, and that we might now be speeded by good fortune, having begun so ill.

In the business of getting the ship under way and sailing her to this point, the new mate acquitted himself well, and in nowise after the harsh manner promised by his looks, which was indeed in the nature of a pleasant disappointment, so persuaded were we all that he had the will to be a tyrant. However, the captain was almost constantly on deck, which must have curbed him, had he ever so great a desire to rate and storm, and yet we could not say that he had looked at any with the air of wishing to be worse than he was, wherefore we had to confine our ill opinion of him as yet to his ugliness, which was indeed passing great.

In reasonable time we cleared the Channel and began to climb the long Atlantic swells. We saw nothing more of the Dutchman, and little apprehended any further alarms from him, as he must by this time have consulted prudence and taken himself out of these waters. We had repaired the little damage he had done to our spars and rigging, and thus, as we finally made the open sea, we seemed in good case to go blithely on with the voyage.

Several days now passed, during which we had favourable winds, and the Industry made very good progress. One morning, being sent on some matter to the hold, I heard a running about and shouting on deck, and on calling up to learn the cause was told that a large ship was in sight.

"She's a fast craft—by the way we are raising her," said the fellow who was speaking, "and the captain is in a hurry to bring her into his glass. He is halfway up the weather shroud, a-goggling away as though for his life."

I dropped what I was doing and climbed hastily out of the hatch.

CHAPTER IV.

OF THE MOVING TALK OF THE YOUNG SAILOR, AND THE STRANGE BEHAVIOUR OF AN OLD ONE.

I HAD thoughts of another Dutchman as I made for the deck. If mynheer was so bold in the Channel, he was surely to be dreaded here, and it would be a marvel, so this fast ship proved to be of his nation and for war, if we escaped in the easy fashion that we did before.

I was up the main shrouds at once, the captain and Master Pradey being in the fore, and when I had well cleared the deck I stopped and took a long look.

The stranger was in the southwestern seaboard, hull down and with only his topsails and the upper part of his courses showing, and at the moment was

standing on the starboard tack. This brought him well forward of our lee beam, as we were on the larboard tack and headed somewhat south of south-west. He was rising rapidly, as his swift whitening and enlarging showed, and at this rate would be hull up and distinct in the course of a few minutes. I watched him eagerly, alternating with curious glances at the captain, who still stuck to his post with the glass screwed in his eye, and presently was able to make out the long dark line of his hull, as it rose for an instant to the top of a swell. He continued to enlarge, and soon the whole oblique range of his sails was plainly in view.

Of a sudden the captain lowered his glass and said something to the mate. I did not catch what it was, but Master Pradey gave a nod, as though of satisfaction, and at once swung down to the deck.

"Run up the colours!" he shouted, flourishing back the knot of men who presently drew about him.

A sailor sprang away, and in a few seconds the flag was mounting aloft. While this was doing I saw Mr. Tym descend from the mizzen rigging, his telescope strapped on his back, and guessed from his easy mien that he too was satisfied with the looks of the stranger. We could now make out his flag, though nothing upon it, yet easily guessed that it must be English, or at least friendly, and with this contented ourselves till he should draw nearer. Master Pradey had betaken himself to the poop, and the captain was still in the rigging, so we had no one to assure us what the telescope had made out,

though from what had happened we could fetch a shrewd guess.

After a little Captain Sellinger shut up his glass and descended to the deck, and upon espying me called me to him, and ordered me to put the Industry in a posture for defence. "Yon ship flies the English flag," he said, "but she may be an enemy, for all that, and we will not be caught napping."

I did as he commanded, and speedily had sail shortened, the magazine opened and several charges of ammunition bestowed just under the main hatch. I also unlocked the arms chest, and saw that the hand weapons were fit for use. When this was done I hastened again on deck and remained watching the strange ship, which was now coming on at a fine swelling rate.

She drew gradually nearer, and soon with the naked eye we could make out the design upon her flag. It was St. George's Cross, as we had suspected, and, moreover, we could now read English build and rig in a score of little peculiarities, discernible at least to a sailor's eye. She was a handsome craft, not too narrow in the beam, yet shapely, and with a perfect cloud of white, well-fitted canvas on her tall spars. She was painted light green, with a wide gilded streak, and showed two ports for bow-chasers (contrary to the custom of merchantmen), besides a large gun amidships, and the usual equipment of sakers and swivels.

By this time we could make out the groups of the officers and men—there must have been at least two score persons in all—and even distinguished, in

a rough way, their faces, noting at least those who wore long beards, and the like.

When we were less than half a mile apart the stranger began to luff, edging along only with a small way, and so crept within quarter of a mile, when he clewed up some of his sails, and came squarely into the wind. We had already put up our helm, seeing that he would have speech with us, and upon this clewed up the remaining light sails and hauled up the mainsail. The two ships now lay head and head, rising and falling gently with the swell. Our captain took his trumpet, and a tall, dark-bearded man coming to the rail of the other ship, also with a trumpet, the hailing began.

"Ship ahoy!" bellowed the other captain. "What ship is that?"

"The Industry, Sellinger master," returned our skipper.

"Where bound?" came from the other trumpet.

"Havana."

"This is the Happy Bess, Captain Torrycorn," announced the skipper of the other ship after a little pause. "We are from New York for London. Will you take a letter for us?"

"Aye, aye!" bellowed our captain back.

At once there was a stir on the deck of the other ship, and in a few moments a boat dangled down from the davits, the captain and two sailors in her, and dropped with a neat splash into the water.

"Put over the gangway ladder," said Captain Sellinger; which we did, and the other captain was soon with us.

After passing a word or two of the usual sort—

that is, concerning their respective ships, ports, and so on—they came to the business in hand, and Captain Torrycorn produced his letter.

"It is for Mr. Jeremiah Hope, of Havana," he said, "a gentleman that you very likely know. By some going astray it was put aboard my ship, and but for you must have taken a long tack before it was delivered."

"I will cheerfully relieve you of it," answered Captain Sellinger. "I do not know Mr. Hope, but have heard of him, and understand that he is a gentleman of worth and consequence. But step into my cabin now, and let us have a drop, as we say, to sweeten the bilge. After that we will go into matters more at large."

Captain Torrycorn made no stand at this, and indeed his bulbous nose showed that he was not one to decline such an invitation, and the two skippers passed into the cabin. Yet before Captain Sellinger closed the door he ordered me to summon Master Pradey, who was on the after part of the poop, and likewise to have aboard the two sailors, that were till now keeping the gig. I ventured to ask if we might not, for the ship's sake, broach a cask of ale, and was kindly answered in the affirmative; whereupon I hastened to execute both commands.

Master Pradey was never a sociable man, but I suppose he conceived that the captain's wish was well enough to regard; wherefore, with a cold nod to me, he repaired to the cabin. I must say here, as the matter will eventually have significance, that he presently came on deck again, and after a little strolled forward, halting at last by the after gang-

port (near the foredeck), where and whereabouts he continued during the rest of Captain Torrycorn's visit.

I made known the captain's good nature to the men, by whom it was received with great favour, and they were not slow in having the two tars out of the boat. Then, having fetched up the ale, all proceeded to set off their pipes and gather round for the news. I took my own stand near by, a bit outside the circle, but within hearing. Both the visitors—judged at a glance—were ordinary English sailors, brown, bluff, and sturdy, with jaw tackle doubtless on an easy run, once the bowl had passed. They gave us a brief account of their ship, growled over the provisions, which, it seems, were of a particularly wretched sort, and in turn fell to questioning us. We gave them the home news, and added some spice at the end by an account of our brush with the Dutchman. This brought out a lively round of talk, the purport of which was that the Dutch had wondrous assurance, but for a fair fight, with even metal, were naught beside the English. When this had passed some one brought up the doings of our ships abroad, and notably in piratical waters, and from here we naturally fell to talking of the buccaneers.

"Nay, mates," said the younger of the two sailors, "I think I can say a word there that shall put a little tingle into your blood. I trow every jack of you has heard of Henry Morgan?"

"Ay, ay!" cried near all our fellows together. "The great freebooter," added several.

"Belay there, mates, and hear me," said the sailor,

flourishing his pipe for silence. "Hast heard what Captain Morgan is now about?"

"No, no!" cried the crew.

"Well, mates, it is the greatest thing conceived by English sailors since the days of Drake. Naught less than the taking of Panama!"

Our men broke out in a hearty note of applause.

"We had it from the brig Prince James, that had spoken the Starlight, and her captain had the news straight from Sir Thomas Modyford, governor of Jamaica," went on the sailor. "So I conceive it must be true. Captain Morgan is even now getting his crews and ships together. He will rendezvous at Hispaniola, and fetch thence to St. Catherine's, whither he will sail straight to the isthmus.'

"Stay a moment," I struck in at this point, and speaking with a disapproving air. "I think but little of this news of yours. What have the Spaniards done to us that we should deal with them in such a fashion? To my thinking it is no better than rank piracy."

"Yet it has the warrant of the King, else report is a liar," said the sailor briskly.

"Nay," said I coldly, "I must needs have proof of that. I can not think his Majesty would consent to such ill-doing. Besides, England and Spain are at peace, and this should surely involve them in war."

"Well, Master Ardick, you take me out of soundings there," said the sailor, with a laugh. "I must stick to my facts—for facts I still think they be—and let such deep matters go."

I saw that nothing was to be gained by this talk

with the fellow, who was, indeed, of better parts than I had supposed, and a kind of "sea lawyer," as the saying is, wherefore I let my argument fall, only drawing myself up with some stiffness, as though in a little contempt of his answer. He fetched a complacent whiff or two, and directly went on. "It is said that Morgan will have close upon two thousand men and above fifty ships, with arms and other outfit to match. He will sail first for Chargre, and after taking that will march straight upon Panama. The governor is already in fear of him, and is preparing to make a mighty defence of the city, but I trow one that will avail him little. A good crew of English tars, with pistol and hanger, and heartened with a pull of strong waters, shall overmatch a whole beggarly army of Jack Spaniards! Then the city taken, what spoil and reward!" Here the fellow's eye lighted. "Why, I have it from them that should know that Morgan and his men fetched home nigh three hundred thousand pounds from Puerto Vello, besides silks, spices, and the like! Then what must be the spoil of Panama?"

"Nay, nay," said I uneasily, for now I began to fear the influence of such talk on the men; "this is all an ill business. Morgan and his fellows are but pirates, letters of commission or no, and it will be a wonder if they do not end their days on the gallows, which at least they deserve!"

But here some grumbling arose from our fellows. "'Vast, Master Ardick; brace not so sharp up," said one. "A commission from the King is deep water enough for me." said a second. "Who would

be nice of a Spaniard?" said a third. And so the murmur went around.

"Nay, then, listen an' you will," I said, with some disgust. "Little good will it do you, unless you mean to join Morgan yourselves, and that, I conceive, you can scarce do at present."

With this I withdrew a bit into the background, yet not so far, I must admit, but I could hear the further talk.

"Panama taken," pursued the sailor, who was now quite at his ease, and flourished his pipe in an impo[illegible] style, "there will be some small jollity for poor Jack. Not less than a month in the city, I will be bound, and no man overhauled for steering his own course! You shall conceive me, mates, what that may mean! Rare women, I am told, there be in Panama, and not least a considerable nunnery. Besides, there are the old wines and the noble pieces of eight!"

Our foolish fellows must break out again in applause.

"What is the last great thing Morgan has done?" presently asked one.

"Why, the taking of Maracaibo," answered the orator, in a little surprise. "Know you not of that? Nay? Then listen. Morgan sailed there with a small fleet, and after much fighting took the town and looted it. He got considerable store of money and rich laces and silks, and matters like those, and also quite a company of beautiful women. He remained a little time, and was on the point of departing, when certain of a fleet of Spanish war ships arrived. You must know that Maracaibo is not just

upon the sea, but rather withdrawn a little, with a considerable lake and stream between. The dons garrisoned the forts, of which there were two, and made ready to move upon Morgan. He, as it appeared, was in something of a trap, for beyond the lake there are great bogs and almost impassable forests. Moreover, the Indians hereabouts are friendly to the Spaniards. But Morgan called a council of his captains, and when he had taken their minds conceived straightway what he would do. He first feigned to be making ready to land and march by the rear of the forts, and while this was doing withdrew his largest ship and filled her with all manner of combustibles. He then had the captives and the plunder into boats—this done covertly—and prepared to start. By this time the dons had fallen into his trap, which is to say, they thought he was about to assail them from the rear, wherefore they called all hands and with labour dragged over their big guns and pointed them from that side. No sooner was this done than Morgan gave the signal, and down he and his fleet moved, the fire ship in advance. Up against him came a goodly Spanish vessel, one that had newly arrived, and straight she and the fire ship fetched to a grapple. Then, my mates, conceive me the Spanish curses! For the stuff in the fire ship was touched off, and at the same time Morgan abandoned his other ship, and in the boats alone swept on and passed the forts. He gave them a broadside from his small arms and two swivels, and continued without scathe out of cannon shot, and thence, at his leisure, to the sea. The other Spanish ships perceiving him coming, and their own

flagship in flames, fetched about and incontinently fled. Thus he escaped his enemies, and after a little delay was back once more in Jamaica, where he is now, as I have told you, ready to bring more glory to England, and put more gold in the lean purses of her tars."

By this time I had fully resolved that the fellow was but a windy forecastle orator and harmless of himself, so he did not lead away men of weaker understanding. Our crew continued to question him, and he related more doings of Morgan, and so they went on till the matter was, as I conceived, talked out. We had a little discourse of other things, and presently the two captains came up from below, and our visitors knocked the ashes from their pipes and hied them to their boat. The other captain gone, we got the cloths upon the ship, and shortly she was drawing away on her course.

The Happy Bess speedily followed our example, and in a brief period after her canvas snowed down from her yards was a mere picking out of white on the northeastern seaboard.

Matters on the Industry now went on as before, and, except that we had more Morgan talk and a little mooning and sighing from some of the men, there was nothing to disturb the former monotony. We continued to drop our latitude, the wind holding as it was, and in a little better than two days more were almost due east of the Bermudas.

One evening, being newly come out to take charge of my watch, I lighted my pipe and sauntered off leisurely to the poop, meaning to take a look at our course. I had proceeded as far as the ladder,

and I think even had one foot upon it, when I heard my name sharply yet stealthily called. I halted, in some surprise, and found that the speaker was old Jack Lewson.

"St! Master Ardick," he said, shuffling up hurriedly. "Belay jaw tackle and stow this away. Overhaul it when nobody is looking."

He thrust a bit of paper into my hand and slipped away. The poop was partly in shadow, and helped cover his movements till he had reached the opposite bulwark, when he pulled up and quietly lighted his pipe.

What could be in the wind?

CHAPTER V.

OF A VERY STIRRING PIECE OF BUSINESS.

I WAS eager and I might say anxious to know what the slip of paper contained, and determined to examine it without delay. I would not take it to the bittacle, for there the helmsman might see me, and yet I was for making use of the bittacle lanthorn. I ascended the poop ladder, turning over a little plot in my mind, and when I was nearly up with the bittacle box I stopped and uttered a sharp exclamation.

"A shilling!" I growled. "Curses light on the villainous tailor that must leave a pocket as open as a chimney! I must have a fling of your lanthorn." I took it out of the box without waiting for his consent, and whisked it around to the hither side. The

fellow dare not leave his tiller, even had he sufficient interest or curiosity to do so, and for the instant I was safe. I held the paper low that none forward could make me out, and on spreading it open discovered that it bore a few lines of most villainous, ugly writing. They had the seeming, indeed, of having been traced with a bit of charcoal or the point of a charred stick. I brought all my clerkly powers to bear, and, in quicker time than I could have thought possible, finally deciphered the words. Luckily they were few in number. "Men be going to mutinize" (so the missive ran). "Fower days. The mate, hee is the leeder. I am watched."

It seemed to me at that moment that the fellow at the wheel must have heard the throb my heart gave. I looked at him as I straightened up—at his black outlines, as he bowed over the tiller tackle—and hung for the moment all in the wind. I have it in my mind that I saw, somewhat as one sees in a dream, the various details of my surroundings—the great falling shadow of the lateen; the far-off, light sky, with its few stars; the vague expanse of the sea, with its slow heave and fall, caught now and again with a faint sparkle. I think my physical eyes took in these things even while my mind was fluttering in the wind, so to speak; but at least I know that I presently shook off the bewilderment, and, though I was still under a vast strain, I quietly picked up the lanthorn and marched back and restored it to its place.

"Good luck," I said by way of explanation. I stopped a moment and peered at the compass card. "Steers easy, I am guessing."

"Aye, sir, with now and then a kick," answered the man a little gruffly.

I left him and walked leisurely to the head of the ladder, whence, with a careless air, I surveyed the deck. By the faint light of the stars I could make out the dim shapes of two of the men, and a red spark by the foot of the mainmast, where a third was at the moment starting his pipe. None were very near, which was the thing I would know. The foot of the poop must lie well in shadow, so that one slipping up to the companion and slyly opening it would run but small risk of being seen. I was heavy and heartsore under the sudden smiting of this business, and could not yet persuade myself that it was all true, or bring myself into the heart of it to appreciate it. Wherefore, as I began now to descend the poop ladder I did so in a stiff, mechanical fashion, as one moves at a word of command, and not of his own free will. I would not refine upon this, and yet, to put you clearly in my place, I must declare to you that what I was now doing seemed distorted and away from the reality of things, and in a sort monstrous. That these fellows, with every seeming of decency, if not honesty, should turn outlaws and desperadoes, and come, perhaps, to cruel murderers, did to me almost pass belief. "Never," I was thinking but a little season before, "was a set of sea dogs better treated, and sure few crews ever grumbled less, Englishmen though most of them be." And now they make a single step of it to rogues and gallows birds! And the mate? Seldom, I trow, does the cabin conspire with the forecastle in a thing like this! Ah, the monstrous villain! But I was ready to believe it of

him. Yes, Nature had fitted him with a figurehead to label him plainly pirate and murderer!

I can not pretend that just these reflections, or all of them, passed through my mind as I descended the ladder and stole along the deck. Some of them did, I am sure, and some may slip out of my imagination now, as I fire up in the thought of it, and seem to belong to that time. Be that as it may, I had dreadful reflections enough, I will be bound, as I whipped along the deck and stole up to the companion door.

I threw one swift glance around and saw no one apparently looking. The two nearest men had swung about and were facing aft, and the smoker had hitched partially around, giving me the square of his shoulder. Now was my opportunity. I darted in, closing the door after me. A glance showed that a lighted lanthorn hung against the mast, but the berth was empty. I stopped for nothing further, but strode long and softly toward the captain's cabin. This was the first—counting from the starboard side—of the three after-rooms, the next being occupied by the mate and the third by the supercargo. I skirted the table and reached the door and put out my hand to rap gently upon it. While yet my knuckles were presented, the door farthest on my right—that is to say, the supercargo's—abruptly opened, and Mr. Tym himself put out his head.

I fell back a step, not being prepared for this interruption, and ere I could speak or utter a caution he strode out and hailed me sharply:

"Stand! What do you seek?"

"Hist, hist!" I said, in a sharp whisper. "A word with you, if you will, but no noise."

By this time he recognised me, which now I saw that he had not at first, and he fell back without a word, and motioned for me to enter. I whipped in with all speed, and immediately that I was past him he gently closed the door. He had not turned in, it seemed, but was sitting up fully dressed, a book open on the table supplying the reason. The berth lanthorn was lighted, as was likewise a small lamp, the latter set in a fixture against the bulkhead.

I immediately advanced my lips to his ear, and acquainted him, in the fewest words possible, with what was doing. "Speak cautiously, sir," I concluded, "for you know the mate's berth adjoins this."

He took away his head, and looked at me as one thunderstruck. Instead of answering, he plucked off his barnacles and put them in the case, and walked to the window. I conceived that he might be collecting his wits, which must be a little shaken, and that without any impairment of his courage. But in a moment he was back, and now his countenance had such a high, bold aspect that it was impossible to mistake it. Clapping up his hand to guide the sound, he said in my ear:

"We will confound the arch villain. Stay but a moment, till I can prepare, and we will be about it."

My own spirits and courage rose at this, and I stood up very sturdily, as I nodded assent.

He thereupon softly advanced to the wall, whence he took down his sword and buckled it on, and from beneath his bunk produced a box, which proved to contain a brace of pistols, with powder and ball.

He handed these weapons to me with a sign to

load them, and while I was obeying him he took from a covered shelf against the bulkhead a little iron tool, which at first I took to be a kind of awl, and this he proceeded to screw into the wooden cap of his arm, having first removed the iron hook. I guessed that this must be a kind of pointed dagger or stiletto, but had not the time then to determine. I went on with the charging of the pistols, but lacking practice (and I dare say being a trifle unsteady), I made but slow work of it, and was relieved when Mr. Tym could help me, which he did with a rapidity and deftness that speedily concluded the business.

I was now ready to hear him declare his plan, but he first took from a nail a coil of small cord, after which he whispered in my ear:

"Before aught else is done we must secure the mate. That stands clear in my mind. And we may not wait to summon the captain, lest the fellow take the alarm. Mark me, I will knock on his door, and say I desire to speak with him. On his appearance we will each clap a pistol to his head—take you this—and compel him forth and bind him. For the carrying out of that I have this cord, which is passing effectual for the purpose. Pradey secured, the backbone of the mutiny is broken, and the captain must deal with the rest. Art ready?"

"Aye," said I steadily, but with no little stirring of the pulse, "quite ready."

He softly opened the door, and we stole out.

The lanthorn was burning, but now very dimly, for it was a candlelight, and the wick grievously needed snuffing. The rats seemed to be bold, or else the stillness and the suspense of the moment

made them seem so, for, as I crossed the threshold, I heard a sharp, sudden little knocking from somewhere in the shadow of the table. It gave me a start, and I glanced that way, only to discover that which affected my nerves a vast deal more. A tall but stooped figure made a scramble from all-four to its feet, and with one long, straddling bound was bursting out of the companion.

"Pradey!" yelled the supercargo, and let fly with his pistol.

I could see that he was too late, and thereupon, with a shock of alarm and mortification, I made a dash of it also, and flew through the open door. The mate was bounding off the quarter-deck to the main, shouting out something which I did not catch, and in a veritable fury I let go my pistol. I could not have made a close shot, but his yelling increased, and now I could see the crew pouring out of the forecastle hatch, and the watch running toward him. I had the sense to perceive that all was up, and sullenly retreated, stopping at the companion to shoot the bolt of the door.

When I turned about, though the place was still a little smoky, I made out both the supercargo and the captain, the latter in his shirt, with a drawn sword in his hand.

"Pray you dress," said Mr. Tym, with excellent coolness, as the captain stood fast, glaring fiercely toward the companion. "Nay, we are safe enough for the moment," he added, glancing down at the door leading into the 'tween-decks, which I now perceived he had secured.

"The abominable villain!" growled Sellinger, re-

laxing his warlike attitude, however, and lowering his point. "I will take your advice, and be with you presently."

He withdrew into his berth, and Mr. Tym said to me, almost humorously:

"Abominable or not, he played a shrewd part, and is like to reap the reward of it. A very pretty piece of eavesdropping, indeed. I pray you snuff that candle, which offends my nose as well as burns illy."

"Here is the old fellow in his fighting mood," I said to myself, as I obeyed him and snuffed the candle. "I think I can conceive him now as he was at Naseby. Yea, and when he made the captain and crew of the lugger to prefer the gale to his anger. How will it be with us now?" I asked aloud. "Can we make a sufficient defence, think you?"

"Nay," he answered coolly, "not if they stand to it with heart. You conceive that they have in all points the advantage. They can starve us out—for we have nothing beyond a few biscuits, and no drink but wine—or can batter in the doors, and bear us down by main force; or they can set a watch upon us, and keep us boxed up here till they reach some convenient point, when they can scuttle the ship, and leave us in the plight of so many inconvenient kittens."

"Stay!" I cried, as a sudden thought struck me. "I think they will be at none of that. I mean the scuttling. Remember you not the magpie from the Happy Bess? He that yarned so concerning Morgan? I am ready to swear that his talk and the mate's scheming have brought this about. These rogues will be for turning pirates."

I had just uttered this when Captain Sellinger came out of his cabin. He was fully dressed, save for his coat, and was now armed with a brace of pistols in addition to his sword.

"What was that talk of pirates?" he asked, having, it seemed, caught my last word.

"Why," said I, "that it seems to me these fellows will be for mastering the ship and then joining Captain Morgan. They have been inclined thereto, I am sure, from the enticing yarns of that sailor from the Happy Bess, and also worked upon, I doubt not, by the mate."

"I believe you have hit the nail on the head;" cried the captain, with a savage slap on the table. "Oh, that snake! Aye, he is at the bottom of it. These simpletons would not have risen but for him. On my soul, never was a crew better treated. Such pork and such beef, and such soft tack on Sundays, and then the scouse and the ale! Ah, well, it avails not talking of it. What is your counsel, Master Tym? What may we do in such a strait?"

I perceived here that Captain Sellinger was not of the parts for an emergency like this that Captain Houthwick was. He was brave enough, and so that there was one above him to take the responsibility, could be sufficiently cool—as witness his handling of the gun in our brush with the Dutchman—but when he must himself be at the head he was like to fall into a state of uncertainty, whence he might be expected either to do too little or too much. Besides, in the present matter he was somewhat overborne by his anger and just indignation.

"My counsel is of the simplest," answered Mr. Tym without hesitation. "We should stand clear of the doors, lest they take it into their heads to shoot through, and watch sharply every point at which they might seek to catch us at advantage. For instance," he added abruptly, and with a wonderful sort of smile, "they might appear yonder."

Quick as thought his pistol went up, and broke into an instant report. He had aimed at a spot just at my back, and by the shattering of glass, even before I could turn my head, I knew it to be one of the grated windows. As I whirled about some bits of the glass fell down within, and it seemed to me that I heard a faint, distant shriek.

"If I did not hit him he will drown," said the old man coolly, as he proceeded to recharge the pistol. "Pradey has too much business on his hands to tarry to pick him up."

I was a little startled at the beginning of this episode, but presently recovered my composure, and imitated Mr. Tym in reloading my weapon. I had scarce poured the powder into the pan when I heard the movement of feet on deck.

"I think they are coming," I said as coolly as I could. Secretly my heart began to thump. "Aye, and another gang advances 'tween-decks," I added, as I also heard a stir there.

"Stand ready," said the supercargo, in low, hard tones. "All together with the pistols, and then a rush. Yet tarry till the rams, or what else they may batter with, have made a fair opening. Master Ardick, you have no sword; therefore remain somewhat back. Also I would counsel you to whip yon cloak

about your left arm, that it may serve in a sort as a shield. Pistols forward, friends! They come!"

CHAPTER VI.

OF THE STAND THAT WE MADE, AND DIVERS EVENTS THAT FOLLOWED.

I KNOW not what manner of implements the fellows used, but they were passing effectual, for both doors crashed in at the first assault, and we caught sight of their pack of bodies and bristle of weapons. But an instant so, and then we all let go in a volley, making a tremendous noise in the small place and confusing everything with smoke. One fellow in the opening of the companion fetched a dreadful howl, as high-pitched as a dog's, and before the sound was well out of him, thrust headlong forward and crashed down at our feet. The gang in the door thereupon set up a great roaring and cursing, and in the midst of it four or five of them dashed recklessly in. The foremost bent forward, and I saw his hand go out with a pistol in it, but before he could fire the captain let bang at him, and he fetched up short, and gave a queer sort of writhing bow and fell back upon the threshold. The others hung in the wind a moment, but presently came floundering over the body, whereupon Captain Sellinger raised a great shout and set upon them with his sword. I had a moment now to glance over my shoulder, and perceived that Mr. Tym was holding the others at bay, they, indeed, crowding together, cursing and stamping, but not offering to advance.

Encouraged at this, and wishing to be performing some part, I caught up Mr. Tym's cloak, which I had before neglected, wound it around my left arm, and, having exchanged the pistol for my sheathknife, advanced a pace and made ready to fall on. By this time the light in the place was exceeding dim, the smoke, though in part drawing up through the companion, continuing also about the lanthorn, till it had the seeming of a beacon in a fog. Nevertheless, upon looking with some intentness, I made out that the fellows the captain was fighting were three of the ordinary sailors, by name Tom Doll, Will Minton, and Jack Walling, all men of fair courage but not extraordinary able of body or of known skill with weapons. This heartened me, somewhat, for I should have misliked to come to hand blows with a fellow like Lovigne, for instance. I mean I should have shrunk from it in especial, armed as I was. As for the sailors, they seemed to carry hangers and knives, the first of which they must have seasonably stolen from the arms chest, else they could not have popped down with them at this short notice.

The captain had now brought the three men to bay, their backs to the foot of the companion, where he was pressing upon them fiercely, his long sword a little cramped for room, yet of great avail in the thrusts he was speeding. Tom Doll was pinked in the left arm, and seemed to have lost all heart, and the others were barely able, by desperate thwacks at the sword, to keep its point out of their ribs.

"Have at one of these fellows, sir!" I shouted to the captain, and, discretely picking out Doll, I made a bold dash, and so dismayed the rascal that he

fetched his blow at me before the time, and I closed with him ere he could get his hanger up again, and dug my knife into his side. He collapsed like an empty sack, uttering a direful groan, and at the same moment the captain run Minton through the heart. Walling, who was an active fellow, thereupon whirled short, and with one flying bound cleared the door and landed well out upon the deck.

"That gives us riddance of so many of the rogues!" puffed the captain, who was by this time very short of breath. "Stay you here, Ardick, and guard the companion while I go to Tym's assistance. By St. Paul! he has little need of it, such poltroons as these fellows be!"

Mr. Tym had now fallen back a pace from his first station, for some of his adversaries had obtained pistols, and as we joined him they let go a sort of scattering volley. Their range was limited on account of the walls of the stairs, and no harm was done. There was a bit of silence, but not to mention, and immediately the whole gang came bursting up. Then it was that the supercargo acquitted himself rarely. Forward he darted, and before the first fellow, who happened to be Pierre Lovigne, could order his guard, the little lithe man stooped, whipped in, and passed his sword a foot through the burly rascal's midriff. Back two paces the [illegible]d, as the next fellow pressed on, the sword flew round, and with a sidelong stroke shore away two or three of the rascal's fingers. It was all while I seemed to be getting one long breath and letting it out again!

"Have at ye, scum!" yelled the captain, fired at this feat of arms, and he brandished his sword

and ran in upon the now crowded and confused seamen.

Mr. Tym saw the opportunity and sprang to his side, and together they thrust and slashed so fiercely, and yet with such deadly skill, that three more of the sailors were either killed or desperately wounded, and the others broke and poured headlong down the steps.

The captain's blood was up, and he made to follow, but Mr. Tym caught him by the sleeve, and in a word or two showed him the danger of it, so that he reluctantly gave over.

All this time that arch traitor, the mate, had kept in the background, but now we heard his voice, and I conjectured that he was rating and perhaps trying to rally his men. It seemed that he had been in the rear of those who came up from 'tween-decks, but either from necessity or inclination had fallen back when Mr. Tym and the captain made their final onslaught.

But do what he could the fellows he was talking to had no heart for further ventures, and we heard them break away from him and retreat to the forward parts of the ship. He must have followed, for it was immediately quiet 'tween-decks, and so that point of our defence seemed to be safe enough. As for the companion, it still stood open, just as they had broken it in, but the misused door only banged at will with the motion of the ship, and no one appeared to be near it or to guard it.

We now had a little breathing time, and the captain improved it in a literal sense, for he sat down, puffing like a grampus, and wiping the sweat from

his face. Mr. Tym was a gory sight, his sleeves mete for a butcher's, and his face and shirt front bespattered. Likewise his wig was gone, which gave his white, cropped head a strange, pugnacious look, but he seemed as active and unspent as ever. Except for a small cut on his neck and a bruise on his left arm, he declared himself without scathe, and it seemed that the captain had fared as well, as he had only a light prick or two. As for myself, I was quite unhurt.

We were now minded to investigate the condition of the fallen mutineers, and found all dead but one, and he in extremity. He was one Ned Mac Snee, a Scotchman, a quiet sort of fellow, but incontinently carried away by the Morgan business. We placed him in as easy a posture as we could, and examined his wound, which we found to be a grievous stab among the ribs. It was small, as though made by a thick-bladed dagger (upon which I thought I perceived the work of Mr. Tym's chisel-like fixture), but was deep, and had already let out near all the man's blood. He tried to speak, I think to express his contrition for what he had done, but was unable to fetch out any sound, and presently, with a little struggle, he expired. I was sincerely sorry for his death, which I had time to bestow some thought upon, as I had not the others, and, moreover, the fellow was not by nature so very evil, but had rather been led to the ill deed by the counsel of stronger minds and the deceit of his own imagination. However, it was useless thinking upon it now, and I covered his face and we fell back to take a little counsel together. Captain Sellinger was for bringing the

affair to a head without further parley, and would have us sally out and fall upon the fellows and cut them down if they would not surrender. Mr. Tym opposed this, saying we were still three against eight, not including the wounded sailor and old Lewson (the latter would hardly desert to us as yet), and in the open deck we could not expect to work such havoc as we had in the cabin. In the attack here they had fallen on without order or precision, crowding together till they could not get the avail of their weapons, and missing their shots because of their hastiness, but on deck they could spread out and encompass us front and rear, and would be certain to be more circumspect. But for the surprise into which they had been thrown by the sudden call of the mate, it was doubtful if we could have gained the day as it was. "Better to wait then," urged Mr. Tym, "and let the rascals call for a truce, which doubtless they will soon do, being now a light crew for the ship, and likewise lacking nautical instruments, those being all here in the cabin."

By these arguments Mr. Tym finally prevailed, and the idea of an assault was abandoned. I, for my part, heartily agreed with Mr. Tym, for I had my bellyful of fighting for one night, and, moreover, could see no wisdom in periling our heads when a little prudence might protect them. This plan of waiting, then, being decided upon, we fell to work mending the condition of the cabin, dragging the eight bodies dow . into the 'tween-decks, and putting in place as well as we could the broken doors, which we found means to brace so that they would stand. Having completed these and some further better-

ments, we put out the light that we might not tempt any more window shots, and stationed ourselves in the centre of the room. Should there be no further alarm, we meant after awhile to divide into watches —two men in the first, who should continue till morning (now not very far off), and the other for four hours after. In this way we hoped to preserve our strength, of which we had such pressing need.

We pulled our chairs near together, that we might hear one another without loud speaking, and discoursed for some time on our case. In the course of this talk I was made aware why it doubtless was that the mate had chosen the fourth day hence for the carrying out of his plot. We should then be at our nearest distance to the island of Hispaniola, and if he designed to join Morgan he must strike then or thereafter be delayed, and perhaps run greater risk. But for old Lewson's warning, it was altogether likely that his vile plot would have succeeded, as we must have been surprised and taken at disadvantage, none of us dreaming of such baseness and treachery.

We then fell to talking more to the present purpose, and Captain Sellinger remarked that at least we were in command of nearly all the powder in the ship, the magazine lying beneath, in the hold, and the double doors betwixt that and the general storage securely locked. It would require the use of a ram and violence, or considerable work of carpentry to break through.

"Yet I conceive they might employ one or the other," said Mr. Tym, "and since we have the floor of the storage room between us and the magazine,

the sound might be cut off. I think we had best raise yon trap, to be prudent. Say, you do it, Master Ardick."

I disturbed the scuttle accordingly, and we moved that way that we might catch even a small sound of operation.

"At least, if it comes to the worst, we can blow up the ship," said the captain, with a setting together of the lips, yet not quite so desperate as his air was, I thought.

"It might serve, if it came to choosing a manner of death," answered the supercargo, with a sober but calm manner, which I doubted not was the reflection of his thought.

"I pray you let us think of less desperate measures," I said, quite disturbed. "Surely, we should take much encouragement from what we have done, and trust to the like fortune in the future. They are but eight, as you say, and for the most part of small skill with arms. We are only three, but all have a good knowledge of weapons—for I would have you to know that I am no novice with either broadsword or backsword, having had instruction from an approved *maître d'armes*,—so the real odds are by no means what they seem."

"This is all good," said Mr. Tym, with a tranquil air, "and I doubt not that we could hold them a stiff bout, so we could have them all in front, and no use of firearms. Yet let us remain as we are for a while, and see whether a still better way will not open."

"Faith," said the captain quickly, "it may be opening now. I see some sort of glimmer or spark through the chinks in yon door."

He nodded toward the companion, and we all rose and stood silently regarding it. I had previously possessed myself of one of the men's hangers, and this I softly drew, while Mr. Tym and the captain held their swords in readiness.

The spark flickered before the cracks in the door, and I was just thinking that it might be the match of an old-fashioned gun, and had opened my mouth to utter a warning, when the glimmer increased to a little clear flame, and as it did so some one knocked on the door.

"Who is there?" called out Captain Sellinger.

"It's us, sir—Toby Hedge and Tom Flyng."

"What do you want, Hedge and Flyng?"

"We are from the mate, sir, with a message," answered the same voice.

"What manner of light is that?"

"Only a lanthorn, sir. It went out but now, and we touched it off again."

"That they might resolve how badly the door had fared," said Mr. Tym, in an undertone.

"What want you?" went on Captain Sellinger.

"The mate, he summons you to surrender, sir. If you refuse he will have all your lives."

Despite the terror of the situation, I could scarce forbear smiling. The fellow's voice had the most marvellous castdown mobl mingled with an air of respect for the captain—something that long habit would not quite suffer him to escape from—that could be imagined. But Captain Sellinger only looked uncommonly solemn and stern.

"The mate is a villain, and you likewise," he made answer. "For myself, I bid the whole ras-

cally pack of you defiance! Yet stay a little, and I will give you the word of the others. What say you, friends?" he concluded, turning to us. "Have you a message of another sort?"

"What manner of terms does Master Pradey offer?" spoke up Mr. Tym, somewhat to my surprise.

"He will spare your lives and give you good treatment," answered the sailor. It seemed to me that he spoke something eagerly.

"Of what sort are the mate's plans?"

The man hung a little in the wind.

"There you have me out of soundings, sir," he said at last. "You will need to ask Master Pradey."

"I have done with him," said the supercargo, turning with an indifferent air to the captain. "I did not try him."

"And I wish not even to go to that limit," said I.

"Hark'ee, fellows!" cried Captain Sellinger sternly. "Begone, and tell that lobscouring villain to do as he lists. We will neither trust him nor hold further parley with him."

The men received the message in silence, and presently we heard them retire, and the glimmer of their lanthorn died out.

"I think they will now leave us in peace for a little," said Mr. Tym, with the remark sheathing his sword. "They have found they can neither overbear us nor cozen us, and till they think of something new will of necessity do nothing."

"I hold the same," said the captain, "and my counsel is that we take advantage of the lull, and catch a little rest."

"With all my heart," said the supercargo. "Let us be about it." He yawned prodigiously, but added, laughing: "I am not so worn out as I seem. 'Twas but a lazy trick of youth."

I felt much encouragement and, in a sort, relief at his manner. The strain till now had been great, and my courage, in some wise, had begun to flag. In truth, I was new at such business, and had not learned that steadfastness and command over my nerves that were to come with future experience. We were now ready to arrange our watches, and it only remained to decide who should first stand and who turn in. We settled this after a little argument by my being chosen for the watch below (using the nautical phrase, though in strictness it scarcely applied), and I accordingly selected the mate's cabin, and stretched myself in the bunk. I removed none of my clothing, and merely laid my hanger on a stool, and placed my pistol (I had picked up one dropped by a mutineer, and so had returned the one borrowed of Mr. Tym) on the table hard by. I had no thought of being able to sleep, for I conceived my nerves must be too tightly strained, but I hoped to get a thorough rest, and bring myself to a state of greater calmness. With this intent I placed myself in a comfortable posture and closed my eyes. I was immediately sensible of the various noises of the ship. She was travelling busily through the seas, lifting and sinking as steadily as clockwork, her fabric jarring as she struck into the hollows, and anon creaking and falling to an instant's silence as she rose on the next water hill. After a time these sounds soothed me, and my nerves lost their tensity,

so that I really rested, if I could not sleep. I reviewed the events of the night, and now for the first time clearly. I passed on to our prospects, and on the whole looked upon them with greater hope than hitherto. I saw why it was that Pradey and his crew were in even a worse case than we had conceived. They had no powder, save what was in their pistols, for we were in command of the magazine, and there was none bestowed outside. Of these pistols there were not above fifteen or twenty, and not all were loaded. I would tell Mr. Tym and the captain of this hopeful thing as soon as my watch was on. They, poor men, must find it pretty dull out there blinking at the dark. Here I yawned, from sympathy. I was not sleepy—not in the least. Let me think. Aye, but think of what? The sea had fallen to a strange calm, all the noises of the ship were hushed, and presently I found that I was not on shipboard at all, but in my old home, at Portsmouth. There, somehow not to my amazement, the parlour had shrunk to the size of old Gaffer Higging's push cart. No, not the push cart, but Mr. Tym's wig, which, come to think upon it, he had put on after the fight, so it could not be that. What was it, then? The thing troubled me, and I must settle it. Aye, settle it without delay. Let me think, then —think profoundly.

I can not say how long I slept, but I know I was awakened at last by a sound of crashing wood, and on starting up I found the ship almost without motion and a few faint day streaks coming in at the window. I was on my feet straightway and caught up my hanger and pistol. What had happened I

could not conjecture, but it must be something of import. I hearkened for an instant, but there was no repetition of the sound, and without tarrying longer I flung open the door and rushed out. My friends were on their feet, sword in hand, and by the cocking of their heads were in the act of listening.

"What is it?" I cried. "What is doing?"

"Nay, we know not for a certainty," replied Mr. Tym coolly, "but by the noise it is the splintering of boats."

"Devil's work of Pradey," cried the captain between his teeth.

"Is it not light enough to scan the deck?" I asked. "I think there be cracks in the door sufficient to see through."

"We tried but now, and could discover nothing," answered the supercargo. "Yet no harm to make a fresh attempt."

With this I stepped to the door and applied my eye to the chiefest crack. It proved not to extend all its first width through, and with the mists that still hung about the deck I could make out nothing.

"What do you see?" asked the captain.

"Nothing as yet," I answered.

I waited a bit, and made a second attempt. This time I thought I caught a glimpse of some shadowy figures. Stimulated by the discovery, I boldly drew away the fastening and peered out. I instantly discovered two or three forms flitting about the bows, and as I looked saw one mount the bulwark and drop over. In a moment it came to me what was doing. The mutineers were deserting the ship; I flung the door wide and made a significant gesture

to my companions. They were beside me in a twinkling, and on beholding the deserted deck tumbled unhesitatingly out. I was at their heels, and we continued to the confines of the quarter-deck, where we fetched up and looked around. All was indeed clear. Poop, after-deck, midships, and foredeck—not a soul to be seen; already the ship, left to steer herself, was fetching round, the yards playing loose, and the canvas beginning to flap and slat.

"To the helm," cried the captain to me, the first instinct of a sailor—the care of the ship—moving in him. He rushed to the rail himself, Mr. Tym following, and I sprang for the poop. I heard a cry behind me just as I gained the foot of the ladder, and delayed for a moment and looked back. My companions had mounted the bulwark and were bending over, and the captain was wagging his head and pointing at something over the quarter. I was at no loss to guess what it was, and upon running a bit one side and looking past the poop I made certain. It was, in fact, the escaping mutineers.

They were all in one boat—the ship's longboat—and by the aid of several oars were drawing pretty fast to windward. I could not stop to make more of them than this, for the ship was now all ways in the wind, and I hastened to fetch her upon her course. The breeze was light and no harm done, and I presently had her about her business and all drawing as it should. By this time the boat was again under my observation, for she was now upon the weather bow instead of the weather quarter, and I had opportunity to scan her with more exactness. She held all the ten men—that is, the mate, old Lewson, the dis-

abled sailor, the cook, the cabin boy, and the five other seamen. I should say here that the cabin boy was scarce of reality a boy, since he was seventeen, and as big as some of the men. The boat was fitted with a sail, which two fellows forward were even now setting, and by the pile of boxes and casks amidships was well supplied with all manner of stores.

By this time it was pretty distinct in my mind that Pradey had out-manœuvred us, and though I hated the wily villain with all my heart, I could not but esteem his exceeding subtilty and wit. As I looked after the boat, resolving these mortifying thoughts, the mate himself rose in the stern sheets, and, to my great but fruitless anger, fetched us a low bow. "Scoundrel, I would answer that with yon swivel were I free to have my way," I said to myself; "aye, though the ship were scuttled and every moment beyond the worth of gold!"

My burst passed harmless, for I dared not let off the gun without authority, and it seemed that Captain Sellinger and Mr. Tym (for what reason I could not guess) were not moved by the insult as I was. Presently Pradey resumed his place and let his craft off a little, and now, at not much more than pistol range from us, I saw him coolly lay his course about a point from ours.

I stood on tiptoes and peered with impatience over the poop, hoping to come by a glimpse of my companions, and resolve what they were doing, but just at the moment I heard Mr. Tym say something, and, following the words, his head rose above the poop ladder.

"At the helm!" he called out composedly.

"Aye, aye!" I answered, almost a-tremble with anxiety. "How fares it?"

"Not over well," he returned with the same coolness. "Pradey has stove the boats and spiked at least a part of the guns. But the captain would have you below."

"Yet a word," I said as I gave up the tiller. "Is the ship scuttled?"

"So the captain conceives. He whipped into the cabin, to note from the window whether the gig was stove or no, and as he was returning descended for a bit to the storeroom. He reported the hold all a-wash."

"Then we are indeed in the plight of your inconvenient kittens!" I cried, flinging myself with all speed toward the poop ladder.

CHAPTER VII.

OF THE GREAT STRAIT WE FOUND OURSELVES IN, AND HOW THAT SUBTLE ROGUE, THE MATE, SEEMED STILL TO TRIUMPH.

My feet were scarce on the deck when I heard the captain cry out, and on turning saw him staring with surprise and some signs of dismay toward the forecastle hatch. I followed his glance, and, lo! from the open trap a thin spit of smoke was rising. Sellinger was jumping off the quarter-deck and running as hard as he could toward the spot, almost before I had discovered what was the matter, and at

the best gait I could muster (in spite of me, a heavy-legged one, as though I had almost gone stale) I followed. At the last I gained on him, and we reached the hatch at nearly the same moment. The cover was off, and the hole was darkening with the smoke, which, however, was not yet very dense. I made a straight leap of it through, and managed to plunge to a bullseye and open it. The captain at once followed and opened the scuttle opposite, upon which the smoke drew out a little, and we could look around. We found the business, in brief, to be this: The rogues had deliberately opened the cook's fire grate, thereby letting the burning coals out upon the deck, and, in addition, had smeared the woodwork all about with grease and tar. By a great piece of luck, or rather by God's kindness—for I can never consider the thing accidental—the ship, in her falling off, had swung the chiefest part of these coals back upon the hearth, and at the same time had flung an old jerkin, previously hanging upon a hook, at full bigness on the adjoining space of deck. In swinging back many of the coals had landed upon this garment, and, it being woollen, and the coals now somewhat spent, only an ill-smelling and harmless smoke had resulted. Upon the instant that we perceived this, and before the breeze that came in at the bullseye could set anything alight, we closed both openings, and then, with the shovel and a dust-pan, we gathered up the coals and put them back into the grate. It only remained to clap on the fender and secure it, and this dreadful peril was over.

Things here being thus made safe, the captain conceived it wise to pay a visit to the hold, for,

although he had made sure that there was a great and unusual body of water there, he had not determined the rate at which it was gaining, nor, beyond question, that it had made to a point where there was no hope in striving with it. We advanced into the 'tween-decks, accordingly, and from thence descended to the hold, where we immediately perceived that the worst of our forebodings were justified. In sooth, it was a sure turn of work enough, for the bottom had been clean pierced. With our little force to work the pumps, we could no more than partially relieve the ship, and could effect nothing in curing the trouble, which was, in a word, past our mending. The captain wore a gloomy face enough, and I will be bound mine matched it as we made an end of our overhauling. I had snatched up a candle as we were about leaving the cook's quarters, broken it in two, and lighted both ends, and these we had been depending on in our search, but they fetched out a depressing picture now as we turned to ascend the ladder. The poor little glimmers dimly set off the high-piled walls of freight and great braced timbers, while in the space at our feet, as the ship swung, appeared first a glimpse of clear water, like a well, and then a strange little unnatural tide churning in upon us out of the obscurity. We did not pass another word till we were out of the gloomy hole, and I am sure my spirits rose a trifle as we gained the light, dry deck overhead, evil case as we were in. We returned at once to Mr. Tym, and the captain, bravely and coolly, as it seemed to me, reported the thing as it stood. The supercargo looked grave but not dismayed, and said that since such was the situation he

presumed we must forthwith set about constructing a raft.

"Aye," answered the captain briefly. "Follow me and we will at it."

I sent a glance, as they were speaking, over the quarter toward the mutineers' boat, and found it now some little distance away (they having clung nearer the wind than we, for the longboat had a deep keel) and bound about southwest. I doubted not that the villains were standing on their course, Hispaniola lying in that direction, and I could not avoid flinging a curse after them, as I saw them speeding so fairly away, while we were left to this miserable fate. But this thought was not for long, for there was business in hand, and presently I was following the captain and Mr. Tym forward, where, as it seemed, the work of raft building was to begin. We did not stop to try the well, knowing nearly enough what it would show, but proceeded with all haste to prepare our material and put it together, being assured that we had no time to lose. Some spare spars were first laid down as a frame for the structure, other and lighter spars were placed across and firmly lashed, and the spaces between were filled in with such material—small planks and the like—as were readily to be come at. Over all we placed the two cabin doors and the main part of the boards that had formed the bulkhead forward of the 'tween-decks. Empty breakers, or water casks, were then lashed along all sides to act as bulwarks, and the structure was finished. We launched her without much trouble, the sea running light and there being only a small wind, and when she was clear of

the tackle we brought her under the quarter, and with great haste—for now the ship went heavily and showed how nearly she was waterlogged—we fitted her out. We put aboard a light spar for a mast, three or four small pieces of canvas, three oars, and a coil of small line. When this sailing equipment was all safely stowed we lowered aboard some ship's bread, a little tin box of soft tack, a ham, a cask of beef, and a breaker of water. Some other things, such as the ship's instruments, a small supply of spirits, three suits of oilskins, our hand weapons, a little chest belonging to Mr. Tym, and the box containing the captain's papers and letters, we finally added, but I can not now remember the full list.

"She is beginning to settle," said I, just as we got the last things put over.

"Yes," answered Captain Sellinger; "but she may not go down for a little time, for all that."

He seemed loath to quit his good ship, and I could not wonder; but yet there was little room in the business for sentiment. We finally cast off, and I put over our oar and sculled off a matter of a hundred yards or so, where we hung for a little space, at the captain's desire, to watch the end of the poor craft. We had hardly any time to wait. Of a sudden she seemed to give a great jar, steadied, and almost stood still, and then, with a fling upward of her stern, plunged down, and in almost an instant wallowed from sight. The broken waves swung in, riding in rings above her vanished masts, and the space she had occupied was open sea like the rest.

Till the Industry had thus come to her end we could not fetch our minds to other concerns, but now the captain gave a sigh, which seemed to break the spell, and we stirred in our places and presently fell to talking. The longboat was still lifting and falling on the swells to the south of us, her sail not very well filled on account of the light breeze, but yet already a considerable distance off, and slowly gaining. For ourselves, we had hoisted no canvas, and were making no effort to come upon any course, and were therefore merely slipping gently to leeward. Mr. Tym sat upon a box, his long sea cloak about him and his eyes squinting after the receding boat, and the captain and I were aft, squat Turk fashion, and, like the supercago, with glances fixed in a kind of fascination upon the boat.

"Pray, where do you prick us down on the chart?" inquired Mr. Tym of the captain, after we had speculated a little upon the weather and the present mild wind.

"Coming at it as near as may be," answered Captain Sellinger, "we should be in thirty-two of north latitude, and in longitude* may be sixty. That would fetch us somewhat above a hundred miles east of the Bermudas, and near to eight hundred miles from our port."

"I had thought a bit farther north and east," returned the supercargo, "but doubtless I am astray as to your last observation. Then, such being the

* The methods of obtaining longitude were then so imperfect that the captain's answer must be regarded as in effect no more than a broad guess.

figures, what say you we should deduce from them—in other words, how shall we lay our course?"

This question interested me so much that I took my eyes from the longboat while the captain replied to it.

"Well," he said, with a bitter look into the south, "had we yonder boat I could fetch you a straight answer, but what navigator shall lay you the course of a raft? It will be as the wind says. As it holds now, we might strive to make the Bermudas; but by the looks of the sky and the smell of the air there should presently be a change, and it is odds that it fetches then from the north."

"By which it seems," said the supercargo rather gravely, "that we are in a worse case than I had conceived, and can do little save wait and trust in God. I had thought," he added more in his usual manner, "that this was the trade wind, which we count to be in a manner steadfast."

"Aye, and so it is," answered the captain, "only not at present confirmed and with a staying weight in it. But since it is better to do something than nothing and no harm can come by it, we will set the sail. Master Ardick, pluck the mast from among the raffle yonder, fetch that large piece of canvas, and let us see what this craft will do under cloths."

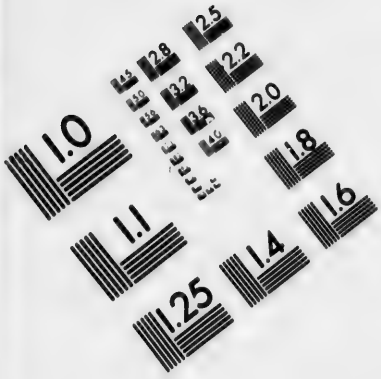
It came like a bit of cheer to have this rational thing to do, after such a solemn go-round, and I made haste to overhaul the spar and canvas and fetch them aft. Here was the clearest space, and I spread the articles out, and the captain and I fell to work. In a very little time we had the affair ready, and I carried it forward and put it in place. The

sail was cut after the shoulder-of-mutton fashion—that is, triangular—and was kept out by a stick at the bottom, serving as a boom. It was controlled by a bit of small line, for a sheet, and this could also be used to furl the sail with. We drove down two stout sticks aft, for thole pins, and into this row-lock the captain thrust an oar, and we presently brought the clumsy craft before the wind. We were now heading in a sort for the Bermudas, yet quite a little too far north (the wind being at this precise time somewhat east of southeast), and so, with a considerable poppling of water at the bows and a bellying out of the sail, but only a moderate real progress, we stood away.

By this time some showing of what the captain had prophesied as to a change of weather began to appear. The sun was now pretty high, but it did not strike down with its usual heat, a thin, whitish, almost imperceptible haze floating between, and presently I noticed that the northern sea line was a little darkened, so that the horizon itself was not so sharply cut as it had been. The air, too, had a changed feeling—a little damper, as I might say, and with more of the ocean smell in it. I now surmised that we were to catch a bit of a blow, though not a hurricane, and that the wind would presently shift to the north. What sort of business we could make of it Heaven only knew, and it was with no little stirring of apprehension that I finally gave over my studying and directed a more general look around. The longboat was still travelling southwest, and no other sail was to be seen. There was the same easy sea, not so deeply blue as before the thin veil came

over the sun, but raising scarcely a crest, and swinging and sinking in diminishing water hills and valleys. The raft climbed up and slid dow[illegible] the fashion that such a contrivance must, dash[illegible] a bit of spray over us now and then, but yet making some headway, and in this sort we continued for perhaps two hours. By that time we had all thought it best to get into our oilskins, Mr. Tym likewise discarding his wig, and in lieu of it drawing on a little knit cap, like a nightcap, and when at last it was quite a bit past noon I got out and served dinner. Of course it had to be eaten cold, but we added a little brandy, and it relished well, and after this nothing happened till nearly night. Meanwhile we had quite sunk the whaleboat, as her bit of sail blended at last with the faint flings of white in the growing southern crests, and so we were left with the ugly memory of her and a bare sea line. Equipped as she was, and well handled I doubted not, she stood fair to make her port, for though the mate must guess at his course he could scarce wholly miss it, as the islands in that quarter stand athwart hundreds of miles of ocean, and surely he could make some landfall, if not at first Hispaniola. As for such stiff winds as he might expect, they would, indeed, be dangerous, but I believed in such a stanch boat he would outweather them. How different was our case, afloat on this mere floor, where a few powerful seas must sweep us off or smother us in our lashings!

I have said the day was nearly spent, and thus far no new thing of note had happened. The wind had swung a little into the north, giving token of what was to be expected, and the sea was coming up



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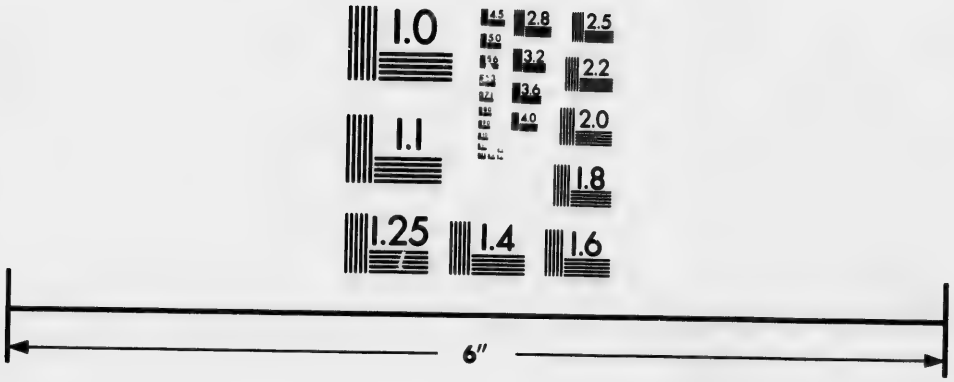

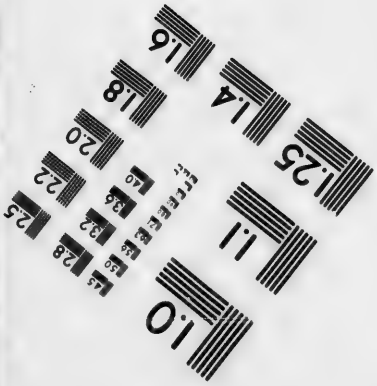

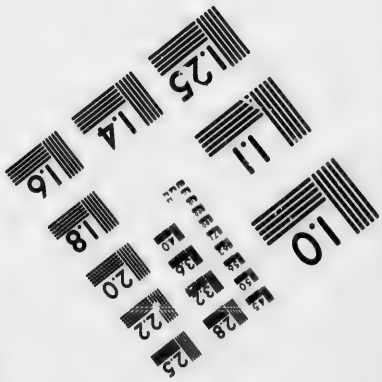

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a bit, but as yet had made no heads of dangerous size. The sun was setting red, but with a topping of gray clouds, and the air was growing chilly, though it could not yet be called cold. I swept the sea line once more for a sail, but without success, whereupon, feeling weary and a bit discouraged, I flung myself down and drew a piece of canvas over me. I heard Mr. Tym stir about a little—I say heard, for I had covered my head for the moment—and presently knew that he had gone aft to relieve the captain at the helm. I had a strange sort of quiet, secure feeling come over me, then, in a way as though I had no further care of this business and scarce needed to feel fear, and in a moment I was lapsing from that into a drowse. I was called back to myself by a loud tone of talking, and on throwing back the canvas found Mr. Tym and the captain on their feet and looking with a great seeming of eagerness toward some point in the western seaboard. I flung the canvas wholly from me and sprang up.

CHAPTER VIII.

OF THE MOCKERY OF THE SHIP, AND THE RESCUER THAT FINALLY CAME.

THE sea had darkened even in the few moments I had been under the canvas, and only a pale, lemon-coloured streak in the west remained of the sunset. The raft canted and made its downward slide just as I got the steadiness of my legs, and I could only whisk my eye, so to speak, over the shoulder of the

crest, before we had dropped into the duskiness of the hollow. But in that glimpse I saw what it was my companions had discovered. Against the yellow western band stood out a black dot, which could only be a sail!

My heart gave a great jump, and I could have shouted, but in the end I contented myself with saying two or three times profoundly, "Thank God!" and with that stood quietly on my straddled legs, waiting for the next rise of the raft. My companions had given over their talking, and seemed to be holding themselves in patience, as I was, only that, I think, Mr. Tym spoke to me as I stood about for my balance, and so drew his notice. The raft swung to the top of the crest, and as it tipped for the next slide we all looked eagerly for the black dot. There it was, as distinct as ever, and beyond any manner of doubt the narrow-wise view of a ship! We cried out in a kind of cheer, and I then fell to asking with eagerness how long she had been in sight.

"I raised her but a moment since," answered the captain. "She showed first as you see her, and must therefore be bows-on. But, pray you, pass me my glass, and I will see what further can be made of her."

I hastened to fetch his glass from his box of instruments, and when the next lift of the raft was he brought it to bear.

Mr. Tym and I hung on his words, for it was an anxious moment, and presently felt a vast relief when he broke out:

"Yes, a large ship, and bows-on. She can scarce

be above four or five miles away, and so she does not change her course should fetch up to us within an hour!"

I could not restrain a step or two of a sailor's shuffle at this, so great was my delight, and Mr. Tym smiled.

"Let us have down the sail," pursued the captain, "for now it does us no good, and puts us to the labour of steering."

I perceived with this that the wind had indeed hauled much to the north, and was therefore driving us continually to leeward. I jumped to the sail and shut it up to the mast and whipped the sheet round it. By this time quite sharp airs were blowing, and the heads of the seas had come up in a sort to fling the spray in small showers over us. We did not much heed this, and drew together in the middle of the raft, and while we kept an eye out for ship, continued our discourse.

"I mistrust she is a Spaniard," said the captain. "She may well come from the Florida coast."

"I wish you might be wrong," said I, "for the Spanish have no love for us at this time. There has been too much doing by the buccaneers."

"Yet we could speak them fair," said Mr. Tym, "and if pushed to it compound with them in some small manner of ransom. I could raise a sum, given a little time."

"Marry," said I, quite with a light heart, for the prospect of escape had flown like wine into my head, "I am for them, ransom or no ransom. Better a living slave than a dead sailor."

We said no more for the time, and busied our-

selves in watching the ship, which seemed to grow apace, though night had so far fallen that we could make out nothing but the bare outline of her foretopsail and the upper part of her forecourse. We began to grow a bit uneasy, and in some haste I lighted a lanthorn and mastheaded it, and we prepared our firearms. The yellow in the west had now quite faded out, leaving a cold gray, and the duskiness on the sea had begun to fill the hollows black and barely disclosed the white in the fling of the highest crests. Withal, the cloudiness in the north had extended and was closing us round, and there began to be a little spite in the increasing wind.

We grew more and more uneasy, especially as the ship showed no answering light, and presently the captain fired off his pistols. We listened with all our ears, but there was no reply, and then Mr. Tym and I took our weapons, and the three of us let go a volley. It was the same. The noise was borne off on the wind, and when fully five minutes had passed we could still detect nothing but the slapping of the raft on the seas and the shower and wash of the falling crests. The thing was growing serious. Our lightheartedness had now quite left us, and we looked at one another with dubious glances. It was inconceivable that the ship was not by this time up with us, and it stood probable that every moment was taking her farther from us. We fired more pistols, and even fell to shouting, but all to no avail. Nothing that we could do served to pierce that dreadful murkiness, and bring either sight or sound out of it. Once—this was a little time after our second volley —I did half fancy I heard a faint, far-off hail, but on

listening more intently was persuaded it was only a sharper note of the wind. We rounded down in despairing postures, in no heart to talk, and in this wretched state continued for full ten minutes. By this time every high wave was breaking over the raft, and it was only by the hold we had on the lashings that we were not, on two or three occasions, washed overboard. In a kind of sullen, half-despairing fashion I secured myself where I was, employing a turn or two of small line to do so, and noted that my companions did the same.

Above an hour went by. It was now pitch dark, and a swinging, heavy sea. Again and again great crests overtook us and toppled down upon us, almost depriving us of sense and breath, and with a volume to have fairly suffocated us had we not been in the middle of the raft, with the space beyond to offer a barrier. We were soon wet over the greater part of our bodies, notwithstanding the oilskins, and, had the water been cold, as fortunately, being in the tropics, it was not, we must speedily have chilled, and so have fallen ready victims to the beating of the water and to exhaustion. At the end of the hour Mr. Tym made a little movement, and, upon the raft climbing to the height of a sea, he called out that he was for having a nibble of hard-tack and a sup of brandy. Whereupon—such was the cheer that this brave soul put into the captain and me—we were for a little refreshment, too, and straightway had it, notwithstanding the constant drenchings and the wild climbing and pitching of the raft. After that we settled to our former postures, and I think remained so for two or three hours. About this time the sky

became a bit lighter, and, though the wind held in the same quarter, we thought it did not increase in weight. This was at least not unfavourable, and we heartened a bit and contrived to get another snatch at the hard-tack and brandy. I was thirsty, for my part, and would have been glad to exchange the pull at the brandy flask for a few swallows of water, but the two breakers were secured at the extremes of the raft, and it was too dangerous to cast off my lashings and move, so I forbore. One thing I did do, and that my companions imitated me in, which was to lay hold on some pieces of canvas that were fortunately within safe reach and convert them into cloaks or coverings. We could muffle ourselves in these and in a great degree escape the unpleasant fuss of gasping and coughing that every big wave was like to cause. After perhaps two hours more the clouds overhead parted and a few stars shone out. This was not a little cheering, for now it was not absolutely dark (our lanthorn had long since gone out, being so whacked and shaken about that the poor candle could not abide it), and there was a prospect that the wind had reached its height. Muffled in my patch of canvas, I crouched on the drenched planks, weary, making a mushing ado of wet at every movement, and with the confusion of a great crash of water over me at intervals, and yet with some little upspringing of hope and courage. At times I conceive I must have drowsed, for I know the din and yerking to and fro seemed to abate, and once I found myself gasping and spitting out water, as though I had been caught off my guard and a heavy shower had found its way inside my cowl. I

will not dwell longer on the events of that night. The other weary hours dragged by at last. By degrees we could dimly see a little space around, then some light clouds of vapour broke up and curled away, and low down on one horizon there was a yellow, brightening band. It reddened and climbed higher, and presently, with a little glorious tremble, a bit of the sun himself broke above the water boundary. Never was he more welcome. The sea still ran high, but the sky was clearing, and, as the wind held in its old quarter, there was no cross-swell, and in all these things was encouragement. We stirred a bit and began to talk, and, after a little, watching carefully my time, I contrived to crawl to one of the water breakers, and refreshed us all with a drink. From this we took still more liberties, and at last managed to reach the ham (well pickled it was by this time as well as smoked, but we paid no heed to that), and likewise some more of the hard-tack. This was in a water-tight tin box, and had come to no harm, and with that and the meat, washed down with a liberal allowance of wine, we made a rare, delightful breakfast. I scarce need to say that we had not meanwhile neglected to look for a sail, but we could raise none, nor did we see so much as a bird, whether afloat or flying, a somewhat odd and lonesome thing as we counted it. I will not linger on the other events of that day. Nothing of note happened, and the raft went on lurching and plunging before the steady north wind. Night came at last, and with it a starred sky, and we lashed ourselves in our old places, and between nodding and waking got in a weary fashion through. The next day the wind had

lost a little weight, though the seas had not diminished, and at times we got short snatches of sleep. We constantly swept the horizon for a sail, but raised none, and in this weary sort the day finally passed. On the following morning the wind had abated still more, and the seas were not so high, but yet the wretched raft pitched and smashed down in a fashion that gave us little ease or security. The next day it was almost the same, though I think it was on that morning that the wind hauled a few points west and the air became warmer. We continued to lie curled up in the middle of the raft, a good similitude being of so many seals on a cake of ice, and thus managed to abide through the fourth night. The fifth morning the wind had fallen yet a little more, and at last the sea was somewhat calmer, and we ventured to cast off our lashings and stir around. With the canvas coverings thrown aside and our countenances fully disclosed, we showed what a change this wretched business had wrought. Mr. Tym had quite lost his bloom, his face was pale and his eyes sunken, and, with the white hair peeping from beneath his skullcap and the hoar stubble on his chaps, he looked to have put ten years to his age. The captain's countenance was drawn and his eyes bloodshot, and particles of spray had settled on the tanned breadth of his face till it had the seeming of a piece of meat left out of pickle. As for me, I know not to what degree I was changed, but I have no reason to doubt to an equal harshness with my companions. That day we enjoyed a little more ease than we had before, and when night came had the satisfaction of finding the wind falling, which in the

sequel it did till it was almost calm. The next morning the last ripple was gone and the raft was merely rising and falling on the swell. We lay in this case till afternoon, the heat becoming considerable, but we not minding it because of the chilled, wet condition we had been in, and which we had not fully recovered from, and so continued till about two of the clock, when we got a breath of the ordinary trade wind. This was from the northeast, veering to east, and before it the raft once more got under headway.

"This should blow some ship down to us," said Captain Sellinger, rousing and reaching for his glass. "Here, Ardick," he went on, passing the instrument to me, "your eyes are good. Sweep me yon seaboard."

I pulled out the tubes, and without much spirit—for I had done the same thing fruitlessly over and over again—put the glass to my eye. The trade-wind clouds were blowing up in that quarter, and hung light and tailing down nearly to the sea line, and at first I brought nothing else into the field. I changed the focus a trifle, and leisurely tried again. Behold, I thought I had a kind of white speck! It was a mere sort of wink, as it were; perhaps only the flash of a gull's wing or the flying up of a crest, and I would not speak of it, nor allow myself to think seriously of it without more evidence. I looked away for an instant, to rest my eyes, and tried again. It was still there, only now firmer and clearer. I waited a moment longer, till there could be no manner of doubt, and then said, as steadily as I could, "I raise a sail."

It was marvellous to see with what quickness, as

though live coals had been thrust under them, my companions started up. The captain caught the glass and clapped it to his eye, and had scarce done so before he shouted, as though from the masthead:

"Sail ho!"

A little colour came into Mr. Tym's cheeks, and he in turn took the glass. His eyes were fairly good, and he had no difficulty in resolving the speck.

"Aye," he said, "it is a sail, and naught else." He threw back his head, and drew a long breath of relief. "How near is she, captain, to fetch a guess?"

"I think not above four or five miles," answered the captain. "We could scarce raise anything beyond that from this low elevation."

We continued to use the glass by turns and to discuss the thing, till at last we had raised the ship to her hull. She was standing fairly toward us, all her sails, including topgallant sails, spread, and looked to be a large, light-floating craft. As yet we could make out no ensign or other thing to determine her nationality.

"She has bow ports," said the captain, who had the glass, "though they are scarce visible, as she is painted. Aye, and passing high bows," he went on. "I incline to think she is either Spanish or Portuguese. Nay, but we must lose no more time, let her be what she may. Take a piece of this canvas, Master Ardick, and display it from the mast."

I speedily had a distress flag flying.

"She sees us!" cried Mr. Tym, who had the glass. "There is a line of heads along the forward bulwarks," he went on, "and a fellow with a telescope is climbing the fore-rigging."

He was right. There was clearly excitement on the ship, and presently we could make out the man with the telescope taking sight at us.

She came along fast, her yards all but square, and studding-sails hung out aloft. Her tall bows sent up a great boiling of white, which sheared smoothly right and left as she came nearer, though with many plumes of spray, and in this gallant style she stormed down till, at last, being but a gunshot off, she clewed up some sail, put down her helm, and, with her long broadside swung around, came drifting down upon us. Now we could see that she was a big ship, indeed, not less than five hundred tons. Moreover, she was heavily armed, and no fewer than twenty ports showed in her sides, and her high foredeck and still higher poop were bristling with sakers and swivels.

A man in dark attire, with a trumpet in his hand, climbed a few feet up the main rigging.

"Now we shall know what nation she is," said Captain Sellinger; "but from that steeple of a poop and the poor awkward ordering of those yards she should be either Spanish or Portuguese."

So, indeed, it seemed to prove. The man presently hailed, and the speech was Spanish.

"Raft ahoy!"

"'Board the ship!" bellowed back the captain. "Nay, but I can go no further," he said, with a laugh. "I have scarce any Spanish. Do you finish the business."

He addressed me, and I sprang up and stood in his room. The ship had rapidly drifted down and was already within a hundred or a hundred and fifty yards. The man in the rigging shouted: "If you

would board us, take to your oars. Be speedy, or you will fall short."

I saw that this was the case, and likewise feared that he might be of that cruel or indifferent sort that would leave us in the lurch if we failed. Wherefore I let fall the talk with him and hurriedly told the others how the matter stood. The ship was not dead to windward, but in the course she was now travelling stood to pass us about forty or fifty yards to the south, and it was to cover this gap that we must row. We fell to it, though it was but a poor piece of work, the raft being so clumsy, and at last drew pretty nigh the ship's bow. It was rising and falling at great heights above us, but a seaman appeared on the boltsprit, and at the right moment cast us a line. I caught it and made it fast, and we quickly warped as near as we dared to the lofty side. The bulwark above us was now black with heads, and presently one popped above the rest, and a dark fellow in a kind of Dutch rig raised himself on the rail, and from there directed us how to proceed. The fore chains were too nearly under the towering house of a fore-deck to serve our turn, and the captain seemed too indifferent to put over a ladder, wherefore we were presently drawn along till we were near amidships, where, indeed, we might make shift to scramble up. This we did, first tying on our backs such articles of value as we cared to preserve, and when we were over the side the raft was cast adrift. We then put down our burdens, and with no little interest and anxiety fetched a look about us.

CHAPTER IX.

OF OUR RECEPTION ON THE SPANISH SHIP.

I MAY have been a bit confused for a moment, for I find I got nothing that sticks in my memory in that first glance. But presently I bring back a crowded deck, most of the faces being dark, and some persons in handsome attire standing a little way from the companion, and for general surroundings a short, flush waist of the ship, poop and foredeck like little castles, and overhead a great but not overneat and shipmanlike spread of spars and sails. Immediately a tall dark man in rough brown clothes, a wide, flapping hat and Flemish boots pushed out of the press, and I recognised the person who had held the trumpet. He fastened his look first upon Mr. Tym, esteeming him, either from a frill or two and some velvet that showed in the openings of his oilskins, or from his bearing, the person of most consequence among us, and with a brusque air fell to addressing him.

The supercargo, as I was aware, had no Spanish, but was too polite to break in, and so suffered the captain to go on to the close, after which he bowed in return and fetched a meaning nod at me.

"If you please, Señor Captain," said I, stepping to the front and touching my hat, "this gentleman is not acquainted with Spanish, but I know it in an imperfect way, and will, with your permission, act as his interpreter. We three are escaped from the English ship Industry, which was scuttled and sunk."—

From here I went on and gave him the other chief outlines of our story. He listened without comment, and when I had finished made a sign to one of his officers and ordered the ship put upon her course. He then turned back to us, and from his cold and rather stern expression I was not expecting a very agreeable or hospitable answer, when there was some stir in the crowd, and those in front stepping aside a tall and stately looking gentleman came deliberately forward. He was, as one would guess, about five-and-fifty years of age, and was comely in the face, but thin, though sturdy and upright in figure. His dress was uncommonly rich, and was the most showy and striking I had seen up to that time, meriting some description. The hat was a Flanders beaver, looped up at one side and set off with feathers, the cloak was of costly black velvet, with gold buttons, and the coat and smalls were of wine-coloured silk, curiously stitched and frogged. He wore Spanish point lace at his sleeves and throat, and his rapier was hung from a rare embroidered shoulder belt, the like of which one would have to travel far to find. The hilt of this rapier was well-nigh covered with gold and jewels, and the scabbard was of silver, set off with all manner of chasing and filigree. His wig was somewhat too black for his light skin and white beard, but was a beautifully ordered thing of itself, the curls being as big as a thick walking stick. To wind up, he was shod with yellow Cordovan boots, and carried in his hand a pair of long Spanish gauntlets, the wrists set off with fine needlework.

I bowed low, somewhat impressed by his elegance, and waited with an air of deference for him to speak.

I doubted not he was some rich grandee, and very likely the owner of the ship and cargo. He looked at me coldly, yet with some curiosity, and after a brief glance at my companion, said in choice Spanish:

"Who are you, señor, and how did you come upon the raft?"

I repeated what I had told the captain, though with some enlargement. As I proceeded I saw his brow darken, especially at the mention that we were English.

"I grieve, señor, to find that you and your friends belong to that nation of heretics and robbers," he said in a severe voice. "Pray, upon what business was your ship, and what was she doing in these waters?"

I perceived the dangerous thing that was in his mind, and suffered no delay in answering. At this point I may say, without much fear of censure, that I very heartily wished Morgan and all his buccaneering set to the devil.

"Why, your lordship," I replied (I clapped this title to him at a venture), "our ship was a peaceful merchantman, and her business was to convey a cargo of English cloths and small wares to Havana, and fetch sugar, spices, and the like thither. Our captain can give you more of this matter."

"And where, think you, went your escaping mutineers?" he inquired, without pause.

This disconcerted me a bit, but I felt it best to out with the truth.

"To join that scoundrel Morgan, if our guess is not greatly at fault," I let go boldly.

He smiled in a grim fashion.

"Aye, señor, such was my thought of the matter. They have gone to join that child of perdition, doubtless, and some good Spanish blood may be shed in consequence. What think you," he went on, looking at me fixedly, "shall I not be doing my sovereign and the Church a service if I endeavour to discharge a small measure of this debt?"

I began to think that we had fallen out of the frying-pan into the fire, for I was at no loss to guess what he meant. Nevertheless I was resolved not to quail, and, indeed, it was possible he might be only trying me. I collected myself, therefore, and answered him.

"A debt, your lordship, should be paid by the debtor, and not by him who has no part in it. The Spanish blood you speak of was not shed by me or by my comrades. We abhor piracy and every such lawless doing."

The hidalgo nodded, but I could not see that I had produced any measurable impression on him. It was an anxious moment, and I discerned that my companions had detected something amiss and come closer, though I could not then give heed to them.

"Well, señor," he replied at last, "there is reason in what you say, and I am not disposed to deal with you harshly. Nevertheless"—here his look hardened again, and my spirits sank—"I can not forget that you are Englishmen. If you yourselves have done my countrymen no harm, neither had the Spaniards of Puerto Velo and Maracaibo done the English harm. Your lives are safe, but you have forfeited your liberty, and on our arrival at Panama

will be sold as slaves. You may go forward for the present and serve with the crew."

He nodded to signify that he had concluded, and, with the same stately precision as at first, passed in among the crowd and made his way out of sight.

I was in a measure dumfounded, and stood where he had left me, trying to grasp the full purport of what had befallen. Cast into slavery, and by the people of a Christian nation! What worse would it have been had we fallen among the heathen Algerines? I was aroused from this overwhelmed state by the voice of Mr. Tym, and, turning about, acquainted both him and the captain with what had passed.

"Slaves to the dons, is it?" said Sellinger, when I had finished. "A middling hard port to steer into, after all that has befallen us! The greasy lob-scourers! I hope we shall manage to put a trick or two upon them before we are done. To think of such tallow-heads making slaves of freeborn Englishmen!"

Mr. Tym's reply was of quite another sort.

"It is a vile outrage, but we must appear to submit. By watching and having the seeming of resignation we may come by a chance of escape. But the thing that mislikes me the most," he broke off with a laugh, "is this playing at sailor. I could manage in some sort on the deck, and even go aloft so I had a safe hold, but the furling and things of that kind I fear will undo me. I shall count myself lucky if I do not come neck and heels to the planks."

"Nay," said I indignantly, for now I thought what all this hardship and ignominy must mean to

him, "I can not think they will carry the matter to such extremes. The don may not have perceived your age and station in life. I will see him and reason with him, and even if you must take up your quarters in the forecastle——"

But he interrupted me.

"Do not so. Let the matter stand. It will be time to remonstrate when there is occasion. As for living in the forecastle, I would not have it otherwise. We must remain together, both for companionship and to be ready for emergency. The fare and the other matters will not vex me. Remember, I have been a soldier."

I was forced to yield to these arguments, and, indeed, I had little hope of effecting anything with the don, and so that matter was concluded. We had time for only a few words further, for soon one of the officers—the boatswain, as I presently discovered—came along and ordered us to pick up our things and follow him to the forecastle. This we accordingly did, I carrying the supercargo's box, to show him that much respect, though he tried to dissuade me. On the way I took some thought of the people about me, not having till now observed them with particularity, and found that most, save a few in armour, who seemed to be professional soldiers, belonged to the ship's company, the passengers not numbering above a score. Of these the greater part were dressed in a rather rich sort, though not comparable to the don, and about one fourth were females. All the world knows how jealous a Spaniard is, and how he seeks to conceal the charms of his womankind, so that I scarce need to say that these

ladies were bewrapped from nose to ankles, and that little except their eyes showed above the folds of their mantillas. One or two were young—that the glimpses of their white, smooth foreheads and erect, graceful figures disclosed—and the rest I took to be old doñas or duennas. As for the men, most were under middle age, and all but one were well enough looking. This exception was a small, wizened person, scantily bearded and melancholy, or at least abstracted in manner, and made to look older than he doubtless was by a great pair of barnacles.

I could not see that we excited any compassion among these people, who, indeed, cast upon us cold or careless glances, and in some despondency and indignation I left them behind and pushed on among the crew. Here there was a bustle, and in the thrusting forward of faces I espied some unkindly ones, but in the main I thought we were not harshly looked upon. One fellow laughed, and the flash of his white teeth was a relief, and another hailed us jocosely as *piratos*, but in the end we made by them without abuse.

I got below, as I have said, and in great weariness put down Mr. Tym's box and fetched a glance around. By degrees, as I became accustomed to the duskiness, I made out the features of the place.

CHAPTER X.

OF OUR NEW QUARTERS AND THE PEOPLE OF THE SHIP.

It was low for the bigness of the ship, and was furnished after a very poor and rough sort. The bunks and hammocks were old and fit to drop apart, none of the timbers or work of the ship were smoothed except by the friction of use, and a mere dilapidated fence served as a bulkhead to part off the cook's quarters. Luckily the smells of the place, ill as they were—for all was disordered and dirty—were not of the worst, for at this time both a windward and a leeward port stood partly open, and the passage of the small breeze through served to sweep out the chiefest of the odours.

It was at best a doleful contrast to my old berth on the Industry, but still safer if not sweeter than the raft, and, though my senses were offended, I quickly fetched about to make the best of it.

"A stanch, roomy berth, señor," I said cheerfully to the boatswain. "Where in it shall we find our quarters?"

I think the fellow expected to find us making nice of the place, and was prepared to answer with some roughness, for at this he fetched me a sort of surprised glance.

"Why, as to that, it matters little," he finally replied. "Aft, there, if you desire. You can go and see."

"*Gracias, señor,*" I rejoined politely. "We will

take advantage of your kindness. Friends, let us pick out a place to sling our hammocks."

I spoke this concluding sentence in English, not changing my tone as I addressed my companions, and by my bearing seeking to convince the boatswain that I really felt as satisfied as I appeared.

We passed through the opening in the crazy bulkhead, and found ourselves in a confined 'tween-decks, the after part being cut off by a row of boxes and barrels. There was a port on each side, furnishing light and air, and on the larboard hand—that is, on the starboard side of the ship—were the cook's quarters. On the starboard hand was a small unused space, and a little amidships from this appeared a narrow opening in the cargo. This I took to be a passage leading to the region of the cabins.

We did not come by a good knowledge of the place instantly, for it was somewhat dimly lighted, the port on the larboard side being closed and that upon the starboard standing scarce two inches upon the hook, but upon peering about a bit first one feature and then another came out.

We had taken two or three steps forward, and I was casting a glance in the direction of the cook's furnace, when an object nearly concealed by it moved, and this I presently saw was the cook himself. He had been sitting on a box, with his elbows on his knees, or in some manner bowed forward, and rose up as we stopped and looked alertly at us. He was a little fellow, inclined to be pursy, and near all his figure was hidden by a long white apron, his face, however, coming out in the winks of a short pipe. I discovered that he had light hair, which is not com-

mon among the Spanish, and this made me notice him a little more than I should otherwise have done.

He came out from his place seeing us halt, and made a little civil gesture, upon which I bowed gravely and gave him good-morning.

"*Buenos días*," he responded, and then, to my great surprise, softly added, "but gude marning in the auld tongue, if sae ye'll hae it."

He took out his pipe as he spoke and crossed over to us.

"What, a Sandy!" I cried, delighted, "and what is he doing here?"

I seized his hand and gave it a most cordial grip, as did also my companions. "Gae a bit cautiously," he whispered, with a meaning nod toward the forecastle. "Ye mauna seem owerpleased. You'll find this a pleasant ship," he added in Spanish, "and able in all weathers. I take it yonder is where you are to sling your hammocks."

My companions caught the point he would make, which was to avoid the jealousy or suspicion of the boatswain, and they did not interrupt, while I returned a suitable answer.

"Peteetion to sling your hammocks noo," he swiftly whispered as I ended. "Likewise say bawldly that ye need a mickle rest, and wad hae a bit drink and a sup."

I nodded and asked aloud for a pipe. "Mine is broken," I said in Spanish, "and you know what a seaman is without his clay."

"To be sure," he responded, "pipes enough, and likewise tobacco. No stint of anything on the Pilanca. I will get them for you at once. How is

it with the other señores? Will they be supplied also?"

"Doubtless," I replied, "though they have Indian-wood pipes that have hitherto served their turn."

"I am to ask the boatswain to grant us a little time below," I whispered to my companion. "Feign overcoming weariness as we pass out."

"On the whole, friend cook," I said aloud, "you may get the pipes, but we will not stay for them. We are exceeding weary, and will crave permission to come presently below. We may then get a moment to taste your clay."

With this I signed to my companions to follow, and returned to the forecastle. The boatswain had lighted his own pipe and was sitting on one of the men's boxes, firing away in leisurely puffs.

I made heavily along to him, exaggerating my real weariness, and preferred my request.

"Aye, if you like," he replied carelessly. "Yonder, in that corner, you will find three hammocks. The fellows that once used them are dead, so you will not need to fight for them. Sling them and afterward take your bite. Aye, and have a turn with the pipe. A seaman is naught without his clay, and you will be the fitter for work."

I thanked him and translated the talk to my companions.

We were not long, saving that we dared not mend our pace too suddenly, in slinging the hammocks and disposing of our few effects. Of these last the greatest, indeed, was Mr. Tym's box, and that had come by rather ill usage, owing to the invasion of sea water.

It was now the beginning of the first dog watch, and none of the men were in the forecastle. The time was seasonable, and we hastened to begin our confab with the cook. He opened both ports a little, giving more light and air, and fetched some empty boxes for seats, and when he had also started his fire we began our discourse. We asked him first what had brought him on a Spanish ship, for we Britons are not often found on such, and in answer he gave us a brief but consistent story of shipping from a Scotch port and in a smart blow falling overboard, to be picked up just in the nick of time by a Spanish coaster. She had carried him to Malaga, he said, his original port being Cartagena, and from there he had been glad to ship on the Pilanca. His story ended, we fell to questioning him on our present surroundings. What was the Pilanca, and who were these fine people she carried?

"Aweel, the Pilanca is naething but a common sort of merchantman," he answered, "and her trade is maist times betwixt Havana and the Straits, but just noo she is a special charterer frae the King. She is carrying Don Perez de Guzman, Governor of Panama, to Chagre, and the auld noble ye clavered wi' is the man."

"Oh, ho!" struck in Mr. Tym, "that enlightens us a bit. We can now conceive why his lordship has so little love for the buccaneers. They have, to be sure, given him a neat bit of trouble."

"Ye may add to the bringing him back frae Spain in a hurry," said the cook with a grin.

"But now a word as to our own state, Sandy," I

began. "Or first, I should be thankful for a better grip of your name."

"It'll be a cordial to hear ye speak it; these loons canna," he answered with a sniff. "It's Donald Mac Ivrach, frae Clagvarloch."

"Then, friend Donald," I went on, "what think you of our prospects? Are they not something dubious?"

"I canna say nae," he answered, his countenance sobering. "Ye are like to be ser'd wi' no sweet sauce ance ye reach Panama."

"Say nothing of dancing to that bos'n's cat meanwhile," growled the captain. "In a cruise to the China Sea and back you'll meet no such dirty box of a craft and such a mob for a crew."

"Nay, I think I have seen worse," interposed Mr. Tym gently. "Friend Donald, does not the water boil?"

"Aye," said the Scotchman, jumping up, "and noo I'll hae ye the bit sup and bite."

He poured some of the water into a brown pot —the contents thereof smelled exceeding good— fetched from a dark closet a wooden tray of ship's bread, and filled with more of the water a little earthen jar. This was fitted with a cover and a nose, and I supposed was a primitive sort of coffee pot.

"Aweel, noo, as to your state," said Mac Ivrach, pausing at the end of the preparations, and thoughtfully lighting his pipe. "I canna pretend to be gleg to answer. Sae I wad mak a spang at it, I wad say bide a wheen, and gie time and luck a bit chance. Meanwhile, ye maun conseeder me your friend, and blithe to do ye a turn."

"Let it rest so," said Mr. Tym. "Surely we can ask no more. And now another question: Who are all these other bravely dressed people? I noticed both men and women."

I saw that we had gone to the bottom of my question, for, indeed, the cook had no ideas to advance, and I turned with some light interest to the other.

"Will it be brawly dressed fowk?" said MacIvrach, brightening. "Nay, but we hae the Governor's leddy—the auld dame wi' the dour look and the bit whiskers—though it's no sure ye wad see them, either, along wi' the mantilla, and sic like—and for anither grit ane, Don Luis Delasco, a count by title, and rich in land and gowd, but sma' in body, and an ill tyke to look upon. He is the Governor's son-in-law, and is no to be envied, they say, sic a deil's ane scauld is her leddyship. Amang the ithers are Don Lopez Castillo, Don Enrique de Cavodilla, and Don Leon de Cruzon. They are hidalgos, and friends o' the Governor, and three mair proud, preceese auld cocks ye'll gae far to find."

We were very well satisfied with this description, and indeed, somewhat surfeited, especially in view of the tempting smells from the cookery. MacIvrach hastily inverted another box, hunted up three pannikins, with spoons, which he placed upon it, and poured out the mess from the pot. It proved to be a delicious onion stew. We lost no time in proving it, which I will say now pleased my palate more than anything I ever remember of eating, and in this wise I continued—being no whit before my companions—till the pot was empty.

"Sae I was a lass I maun be bussed," said Mac Ivrach when we had performed this feat. "Aweel, and I hae a mickle thing left, though I canna say it is to be compared to the ither."

With that he fetched along the other pot, and turned out, not coffee, indeed, but a dark, thin liquor, which had a good-smelling odour. I had never seen the like before, but Mr. Tym at once exclaimed delightedly, "Tea!" and then I knew we were to be served with this new China drink.

"Ye ken I pyked it frae the Governor's ain store," said Mac Ivrach softly. "It wad sell in England this day for abune forty shillings the pund." *

Whether or not the dear price made it more palatable I can not say, but I essayed the drink—having first put in a little sugar, which the Scotchman had meanwhile provided—and found it refreshing, as well as pleasing. The captain, it seemed, was familiar with it, and he, as well as Mr. Tym, drank it with much gusto.

Mac Ivrach now crowned his hospitable efforts by producing pipes and tobacco, and when we had moved the boxes about, that we might take more comfortable postures, we raked a coal from the furnace, and with great ease and pleasure proceeded to light up. Our stomachs were satisfied, we were cosily by ourselves, and the ship was travelling very pleasantly along, so that, for the time at least, we might be

* The tea presented to Charles the Second by the East India Company, in 1666, was said to have been worth about fifty shillings a pound. This was the first tea brought into England.

said to be in a state of comparative content. This was all the more grateful after the long hardship and exposure of the raft. In the discourse that followed we answered freely Mac Ivrach's questions, he having till now but a scant knowledge of us, and contrived to impress him, as I thought, with the advantage to himself in continuing his friendship and good offices. We scrupled not, in labouring to this end, to enlarge upon the deeds of the buccaneers, particularly of Henry Morgan, and expressed our confident belief that the proud Governor would shortly find his chief places of the Isthmus ascending in smoke to the heavens.

The Scotchman discovered great satisfaction at this, and I thought we were sure of him, even though he was serving the Spaniard, and had, possibly, a sinister reason for not returning to the flag of England.

Not long after this some of the crew came down, and though none forced their company on us we conceived that it might not be wise to prolong our confab, and accordingly gave the cook a sign and broke up. In no great while afterward the boatswain summoned us, and we learned that we were presently to be sent into the watches and report for duty. This was done, and we found that the captain was chosen for the first mate's watch, and Mr. Tym and I for the second mate's, or starboard watch. It seemed that we had four hours each, continually—that is, watch and watch.

At four bells Mr. Tym and I were called, and we left the captain to turn in (he being weary enough, as indeed, were we), and repaired to the deck.

CHAPTER XI.

OF THE AUDACIOUS BUCCANEER.

NOTHING noteworthy happened during our watch, little, indeed, pressing to be done, and the Spaniards too lazy or too indifferent to set us tasks. I had Mr. Tym always in my eye, ready to give him a lift should need be, but all passed without the call. On going below again we caught a little rough talk, one sailor conceiving some imaginary offence or other, and swearing at us, but we went quietly by and nothing came of it. The crew in general, I may say, seemed fairish sort of fellows, but lazy and dirty, and in nowise agreeable at nearer range than they were. As to the soldiers, of whom I have hitherto said little, I judged them to be a stupid, slothful set, much given to dicing and drinking, and of small promise if it came to downright fighting. However, I might be a bit prejudiced as to the last. They were chiefly quartered in the 'tween-decks, abaft the cargo, though some, including their captain, had a better billet, namely, the foredeck house.

That night passed uneventfully, and, as I may as well add, to be brief, so did the next three days. The weather held fair, with moderate winds, and there was nothing to put a strain upon any one. Of course, in this time we saw much of the grandees. The most of them were a good deal on deck, though, to be sure, they kept chiefly to the poop, and in a short while I learned to distinguish them, and had picked up the current talk of the ship concerning

them. There was the Governor's wife, for instance, short, and of the build of a Dutch galiot, with many bright colours in her gown and petticoat, but sallow of skin, and in all wonderfully ugly. With her was most times her daughter, the wife of Don Luis Delasco, a large, rather handsome woman, but falling from her prime, and beginning to show the marks of it in a black fuzz on her upper lip. She, the talk went, was a rare scold. With these two, doubtless from hard necessity, was often Don Luis himself. The cook had described him as "an ugly tyke," and so, in fact, he was, yet not harsh of bearing, but only melancholy. Of others that I had pointed out to me and came to recognise, the chief were Don Lopez Castillo, Don Leon de Cruzon, and Don Enrique de Cavodilla. These had their dames and the first two some grown-up daughters with them, but none to call for particular mention. To close, I might add two priests, one the chaplain of the Governor, and the other a chance passenger. Both were fat, greasy-looking fellows.

Meanwhile that this time was passing my companions and I had come by a better knowledge of things touching the voyage and the Governor's plans. It seemed we were to make but one more port before reaching Chagre, that being a place called Baracoa, in the eastern part of the island of Cuba. There the Governor was to transact some business and obtain such fresh stores as we needed, and thence meant to fetch straight over for Chagre. It was customary with Spanish ships bound for the Isthmus to touch at Havana, which would make the run across more to the west, and this was considered safer as to the

danger from the buccaneers, but it appeared that the Governor thought our force strong enough to set at naught this danger. We had to confess some disappointment just here, for we had hoped to touch at Havana, as while there we conceived that some possible circumstance might open a way for our escape. True, we should still be in a Spanish port, but in one much affected by foreigners, and even by Englishmen, and here we had in mind Mr. Jeremiah Hope, to whom, it will be remembered, Captain Sellinger was carrying a letter. However, this sort of reflection was now to no purpose, and we did not long persist in it. We learned further that we were at present about two days' sail from the nearest of the chief West Indies Islands—that is, Puerto Rico—and about six days from Baracoa. This was supposing that the present fair wind held.

On the morning of the fourth day after our rescue something of a thrilling and in part of a dreadful sort happened, and this I shall now proceed to detail. Mr. Tym and I were lying in our hammocks, it being our watch below, when I thought I heard some small stir on deck, followed by the bawling of voices, as though delivering commands. I sat up and listened, for I could not guess what was in the wind, and as I did so the ship suddenly began to saw up and down.

"What is doing?" queried Mr. Tym, sitting up in his hammock, as I had done.

"We seem to be fetching into the wind," I answered, "but I can not say why."

"They are dragging at the ropes!" he exclaimed in surprise. "We are changing our course."

It was clearly so, indeed. While he spoke the ship steadied, and we drove forward again, only now with a leaning deck—in a word, were no longer sailing free, but close hauled.

"It is passing singular," I said, and with one mind we rose and scuffed into our shoes, having a keen desire to solve the mystery. In the forecastle beyond we met the cook, who had just descended the ladder. He was a little out of breath, as though from hurry, and his looks showed something had happened.

"Hoots!" he cried, without waiting for us to speak. "We are a' in a peekle. A buccaneer will be oot yonder."

"A buccaneer!" I cried in surprise and joy. "Are you certain? Nay, that is a pickle that is right enough. When did he heave in sight?"

"He has been showing a' the watch," he answered, "and now we are rising him fast. Gin ye are e'er sae wal pleased, ye wad be wise to hide it," he added under his breath.

I was quick to see the wisdom of the suggestion, and returned an answering nod. "Come, Mr. Tym," I said in a lower and soberer key, "let us go and have a look at this pirate."

I spoke the word pirate with purposed emphasis, knowing that the fellows in the watch—most of whom were now sitting up in their bunks or slapping about in their bare feet—would hear, and so far understand me.

"A *pirato!*" went from one to another. The most sluggish bounced out in a twinkling.

Leaving the cook to finish with them—or those

who would stay to hear—Mr. Tym and I hastened up the ladder.

Truly enough, the sun was in our faces, and the Pilanca was driving eastward, close hauled.

Directly astern, and I guessed now about four or five miles distant, was the well-defined canvas of the supposed buccaneer. There was no saying anything about him, of course, without a glass, and I could merely guess that he was quite a little smaller than the Pilanca. We might be raising him, but of course that would not be apparent without longer inspection.

There was no great change in the weather. The wind had strengthened a trifle since we went below, and there was more head to the seas, but otherwise everything stood nearly the same.

In this part of the ship the watch hung about the braces, as though for orders, and there was an anxious, subdued jabber running round, but no particular confusion.

Aft I found the poop cleared of bright gowns and petticoats, the prudent old Governor thinking, doubtless, it might be wise to offer as few allurements as possible, and in their place were five or six of the shining, armoured guards. Others of these fighting men were disposed about the quarter-deck, and, all told, I guessed the entire company was on duty. The Governor himself, a sombre-lined cloak flung over his gay attire, was walking to and fro on the poop, and Captain Placido was spying with a glass from the weather mizzen shrouds.

It took but a moment to come at these things, and then we looked around for Captain Sellinger, meaning to get further enlightenment regarding the

buccaneer. The captain had been forward on some duty, but now appeared, and we went aside with him and questioned him. There was not very much to tell, he said. The stranger, though coming from a dangerous quarter, excited no suspicion at first. The lookout had raised him in the western seaboard, and for a time he appeared to be bound about south-east. As he drew nearer the glasses were worked upon him, and presently the discovery was made that he spread large canvas for his size, and appeared to be heavily armed. He still continued to creep up, and before long had edged near enough so that some further things in the fashion of his build and rig could be made out. Then it was seen that his lofty spars, sharp bows, and low deck houses strongly indicated him to be English. The Governor thereupon decided to alter the Pilanca's course a little, which he did, fetching her two or three points to the east. At this the stranger made no more bones of it, but put up his helm and stood straight for us. But one thing could now be suspected, yet to be quite confirmed the Governor ran up his flag. The stranger made no response, and continued his course. Then it became certain enough what was in the wind, and a council of the grandees and officers was held. It went grievously against the Governor's pride and that of the dons to run away, but in prudence no other course seemed open. Besides, the safety of the women was to be considered. The foe had the advantage of a nimbler, handier-working ship, and doubtless mustered an equal or larger crew. Moreover, it was odds that this crew were every one desperate, hardy fellows, fearing death

not a rush, and skilled in the use of weapons. For all these reasons the Governor pocketed his pride and put up his helm, and we were now to see what would come of it.

We discussed the matter at some length after the captain had finished his explanations. We decided that a great water-castle like the Pilanca, with relatively small sails and bluff bows, must be inferior at plying, and that some excellent trick of seamanship would be needed if we were to shake off a fellow like the buccaneer.

"And yet," added Captain Sellinger, "there is one point in our favour—I mean in favour of the Pilanca—the wind is stiffening. Should it continue she can carry on to beat this fellow, and may yet escape."

"I conceive," said I, "that we three should arrange some definite plot or plan of action. Let us do so while yet we have the time."

"That I say amen to," said the captain. "Mr. Tym, as your brain is more fertile than mine, conceive something."

"Let us rather all consider," answered the supercargo. "Say that we do so while this watch lasts, and then presently confer."

"Agreed," we said; and in order to get the use of our thoughts the better, as well as to avoid suspicion, Mr. Tym and I thereupon left the captain and mingled with the crew.

The Spaniards looked rather more sourly than usual upon us—which, perhaps, was no great wonder—but nothing was said, and we secured a quiet roost upon the 'midships weather-rail.

The pursuer seemed to be making some gain, though less than I had expected, and I could now get a very distinct view of his slanting square of sail. I wondered at first why our captain did not ease a bit and try what he could do a few points free, but finally concluded that he knew his own ship and his own business best, and that at least it was a waste of time for me to speculate upon it. It was true that he was making the most of the present course, for every rag of canvas was spread, and he had sweat his braces till the yards nigh stood fore and aft. The wind was freshening, as indications had led us to expect, and even now the Pilanca put her nose in with quite a strong thrust, and turned the seas with considerable white ado as she took the strengthened lift and dip of them.

Mr. Tym and I did not talk, for when we were not observing the pursuer we were busy in reflection, and I tried to forget the chatter behind me and the dinning along of the vessel while I made the most of the time.

I confess my brain refused to resolve anything—or anything of moment,—and it was at last with some vexation and doubt of the whole matter that I gave up and jumped off my perch.

The stronger wind, as it seemed, was now helping us, for the sail astern no longer enlarged, after the former fashion. Indeed, I thought the Pilanca was nearly holding her own. In due time our watch went on, and till the other relieved us the supercargo and I were about the deck.

It was now the time that we were to meet to discuss our plans, and accordingly Mr. Tym and I

slipped up from below (where we had gone with the rest, to seem the more natural) and joined the captain. He had us to the weather bow, near the forecastle deck, where was no one at the time, and without delay we began.

There will be no need to give the fulness of the talk. In the end we decided upon a scheme proposed by Mr. Tym and slightly amended by the captain. It was, in brief, that we should construct a little float or raft, on which, as soon as it became dark, or it was evident that the Pilanca was to escape, we should boldly put off. We could make this raft of casks and odds and ends to be obtained for us by the cook, and the launching would be from one of the 'tween-decks ports. Some obstacles that might oppose would be the darkness of the night (if we had to delay till then), rendering it uncertain whether the buccaneer was coming on or no, or a suspicion of us by the Spaniards, causing them to watch us, or it might be that it would come on to blow, rendering the attempt too hazardous. At best we could not foresee the risks and hinderances, and it would be time enough to let them daunt us when they appeared.

Our plot laid, the next thing was to begin to carry it out. The cook, as we expected, was blithe to help us. Indeed, he seemed, I thought, inclined to go with us; but presently, as I started to find out more exactly about it, he shifted the subject. He appeared, however, fully enlisted in our behalf.

The materials for our raft being readily found, were put together. Four casks were used to form the ends (it must necessarily be very narrow, to pass

through the port), and all was made fast with some strong line and a few nails. To avoid discovery, the affair was then carried to an obscure corner of the cook's quarters and partly covered with firewood. We had now made our chief preparations, and had little more to do than await the fitting moment.

On returning to the deck we found the situation in a small degree changed. The buccaneer still stormed along in our wake, but now with a little gain, and the Pilanca continued to hug the wind. By eight bells the enemy was clearly rising, and at two bells he was not greatly beyond cannon range.

I stood by, ready to jump and haul, and with a quickening of excitement awaited the next turn of events.

It was not long in coming. Captain Placido swung upon the lee bulwark, holding on by the main shrouds, and bellowed:

"Down helm! Slack lee braces! Haul on the weather!"

"By heavens! He means to run the gantlet!" exclaimed Mr. Tym.

So it seemed. The buccaneer had been on our lee bow when first discovered, and was still well to the south. By squaring our yards, then, and deliberately pointing our nose southwest, we meant to run under his very nose.

"And yet it stands to be his safest plan," said Captain Sellinger. "A ship like this, riding light and with a poop like a church, will do nothing save with the wind. Once let us fetch by and our chances are doubled."

I saw this too, and with a lively tingle in my veins prepared to watch the dangerous trial.

Captain Placido evidently realized to the full the risk he was taking. The yards were barely squared when he mounted studding sails and ordered all the chief canvas to be wet. Men with buckets were accordingly sent aloft, others forming in line to supply them, and in a few minutes the canvas and topsails were dark with water. The Governor must have ratified this daring piece of business, and I am sure he felt the responsibility of it, for he was in a great state of uneasiness, I do not believe standing quiet for as much as twenty seconds at one time.

It was in truth no light risk. At the very best we must pass within easy cannon shot, and who could tell what fatal ball would splinter a chief spar or bring down by the run some vital piece of canvas?

The buccaneer had altered his course as we altered ours, and was now standing a few points south of east. He could scarce be better than a mile and a half away, and we saw plainly the moving black dots of the crew about his decks. He was a handsome, tigerish-looking fellow, let him be who or what he might.

The Pilanca rose and tilted handsomely down the successive seas. Standing in the waist, it was a wondrous sight to see her mighty stern rise in air, as it were carrying her castellated poop aloft to place it in the clouds, and then to behold the whole sink swiftly and all a-tilt till it stood ready to be dumped into a water valley! Her masts stood the strain of the canvas well. There were broad fields of the

cloths, dark with water and driven hard with wind. To be poetical, in the slim heights of the tops were three snowy patches, where the unwet canvas fell white, like so many peaks of Alp.

Nearer and nearer swung the buccaneer. I could catch even the flash of his wet side now, as he rolled, with a sort of swagger, to the successive, uplifting seas. Nearer still, till a half mile is reeled off, and less than a whole one separates us.

A drum on our quarter-deck beat. The armoured guards fell into line, and their captain drew his sword and stepped out upon the flank. Three of the dons came out of the cabin, all in cuirasses, buff gauntlets, and broad belts hung with pistols. Don Luis Delasco, the Governor's son-in-law, was one of the trio. Then it was Captain Placido's turn. He came to the break of the quarter-deck and faced us.

"Bring up powder and ball for the deck guns. Take the hoods off the brass pieces. Two more men at the helm. Gunners for the port guns below. Master Pedillo, unlock the arms chests and have the hangers and pistols passed up. Master Lonzelo, take six men and fetch up the pikes. Pedro, see that buckets of water are set about, and when all is ready put on the hatches."

It grew wonderfully suggestive of battle, and between that and the strain of our own secret matter my heart thumped exceeding loud and distinct.

Larger and larger grew the buccaneer. The black dots took on the shape of human figures, and the eight ports in his side cut out square, each with its round, target-like ring. The low poop was sparkling with people in armour. He was within easy

cannon shot, at last, and I watched him intently and hardly drew a full breath.

A gun! The jet of flame leaped from the fore-deck, and the powder cloud blew off to leeward. But it was harmless. It had been fired across our bows. Then something shook out above the heads of those on his quarter-deck, and up to the mizzen topgallant-mast travelled a flag. It blew out as it went, broad, double cross * on a crimson field.

"English!" I could not help saying, with the water ready to start in my eyes. "God bless her!"

"She would merely ask us to heave to," said Captain Sellinger in my ear. "Marry, a modest request for a craft of two hundred tons to make of one of five! Now, let's see what the old peacock will do."

Captain Placido hurried up to the Governor and said a few words. What the answer was I could not guess, but at once the captain ran to the main hatch, lifted it, and roared down:

"Train your broadside and fire!"

Then he waved his arms and shouted to those manning the guns:

"Aim and fire!"

The ship trembled with the tremendous concussion. Smoke seemed to rise from everywhere, and the buccaneer disappeared momentarily behind the veil.

When it drifted away at last he was still driving toward us and seemingly unharmed.

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* That is, St. George's Cross and St. Andrew's; St. Michael's was added at a later date.

Some one touched me on the arm; I turned and discovered Mr. Tym.

"Bide a moment and then come below. Let the hatch drop after you."

I was brought abruptly back to our own business and shook myself together. Nobody seemed to be paying any attention to me. I slipped over and dropped quietly down the hatch.

CHAPTER XII.

OF THE CARRYING OUT OF OUR SCHEME.

I FOUND the place deserted, every man being on deck. The port toward the enemy was closed, and, with the hatch down, all was comparatively quiet. I expected momentarily to hear the answering discharge from the buccaneer, but as yet it had not come. There was no time for delay, and I hurried through into our quarters and then found my companions. Mac Ivrach was not in sight.

The place was in some gloom, for the port on the cook's side—that is, the one toward the enemy—was closed, and the other stood but an inch or two upon the hook.

"The crisis is not far off," said Mr. Tym; "wherefore we must be prepared. Should the Pilanca stand the battering and break by, we could scarce be too speedy in taking leave."

I apprehended him. Once get the buccaneer astern, and the Pilanca stood fair to shake him off. In that case we must needs act quickly or not at all.

I now inquired for Mac Ivrach, and was told he would be with us presently.

"He deems it wise to remain about the deck as long as possible and be seen of the crew," explained the captain.

"Hark!" said Mr. Tym; "the English ship is opening fire!"

This was what we were waiting for, and we suspended talk to listen. The sound was somewhat deadened to us, but still it was a heavy and commanding thunder. It continued for several seconds, till I judged all the available guns had been fired.

"I think she aimed high, so as to cut our spars and rigging," said the captain when all was quiet. "At least, there seems no scathe to this part of the hull."

"Let us see how near she is," said I, and I unhooked the starboard port. "Marry, she is on our quarter!" I exclaimed in surprise. "She is not above half a mile distant, but we have clearly dropped her."

The others anxiously looked over my shoulder.

"Nay, you are a little in error," said the captain. "She is more astern, but quite as near."

"She should put forth her best efforts now, wherever she is," said Mr. Tym, after a critical glance. "She is not sure of finding such another opportunity."

"She fetches about to give us her other broadside!" I exclaimed a moment later.

I felt secretly thankful that at least the after part of the ship now pretty effectually shielded us, but

did not put the thought into words. Forthwith the next heavy booming began, and again we listened with great anxiety.

"By heavens, they have winged us!" cried Captain Sellinger, as a sharp, crackling noise rose above the other sounds, followed by the thump of some heavy object.

"A big spar, or I am a liar!" he went on. "Nay, but the buccaneer manages bravely!"

"That may bring the matter to a head," said Mr. Tym coolly. "I think we should now do well to arm."

We ran over to our own corner, accordingly, and hurriedly produced our concealed weapons. These had been hidden away since first we came on board. With other preparations, Mr. Tym failed not to screw in his curious arm dagger.

Scarce was this done when some of the Pilanca's guns began in turn to thunder. None were of large calibre, being merely a few deck pieces on the stern, and we felt little fear of their work.

"You would not wait till we are boarded?" I inquired in some anxiety of Mr. Tym.

"Nay, lest the ship's people, retreating here, might wreak their fury upon us," he answered. "I think we should wait but a little longer."

It would have been no longer, had the matter rested with me, for, indeed, I was growing nervous, but I held my peace.

One or two of the Pilanca's guns went off, and then there was a brief silence, followed by a great shouting.

"Can it be that those lobscourers have hit any-

thing?" exclaimed the captain between contempt and anxiety.

We ran to the port to settle the question, but the buccaneer was so nearly astern of us as to be concealed.

"Some one comes!" I cried, for at that moment the hatch in the forecastle banged sharply down.

"I think Mac Ivrach," cried Mr. Tym, stepping out where he could command the view. "Aye," he immediately announced, "it is the cook."

The fellow came in on a run. "Launch the raft," he cried, "and dinna stop to claver! A' things hae gaen wrang!"

We paused for no more than to get the sense of his words, and flew to the raft and dragged it out. It was from the larboard port that we would launch it, for on the other had been the fighting, and therefore the concentration of the crew.

There were now varied thumping noises on deck, which I took to be the clearing away of the fallen spar and other *débris*, and I was just wondering whether the ship's people felt assured of their escape when there was a commotion of voices aft, and immediately a little thunder of trucks showed that the door leading into the soldiers' berth had been run open. This door was at the end of the narrow passage that I have before spoken of, and was distant from where we stood not over seven or eight paces.

"Quick!" cried Mr. Tym. "Out with it! The guards are upon us!"

We snatched up the raft as though it had been a clothes-pole and made one fair thrust of it into the water.

"Lay aboard, Mr. Tym!" I cried. "I will stand by and cast off."

I had retained the bit of line that answered for the painter, and drew it to a taut scope, as I spoke.

"Not so," he said firmly. "I must hold the passage. Go, you and the captain."

He had whipped his sword from its sheath before he had half finished his speech, and with the conclusion made a long, light bound and gained the narrow opening.

Luckily the soldiers had delayed a little, I think because of some dispute or wrangling, for I heard an oath or two, but as Mr. Tym answered they began to clatter through.

Only one man could advance at a time, and I doubted not the brave little gentleman could hold them in check. Pistols, indeed, the guards did not have, and their guns I conceived they must have left behind.

I did not comply with Mr. Tym's directions, I hardly know why, but in the main I think because I had some shame in leaving him, and because the whole affair was so startling and confusing. No more did the captain heed him, but stood resolutely where he was.

The soldiers brought up of a sudden, their tramping coming to an end and their armour knocking together.

From where I stood I could not make out one, though I looked, with a kind of fascination, toward the narrow hole.

"Santa Madre! what means this?" growled a fellow, seemingly the leader.

"Stand aside, señor! Would you threaten the soldiers of his Excellency's own guard?"

Mr. Tym whipped a glance over his shoulder and saw us still hanging in the wind.

"I pray you, go," he said entreatingly. "I know not how long this will last."

But before we could have complied, even had we the will to do so, the forecastle in the rear came alight, and five or six men swung down the ladder.

"One of the watches," growled the captain. "This is a fine kettle of fish!"

He drew his sword and brushed past me to the opening.

I whipped out my own blade and belayed the painter of the raft to a cleat.

"You had best retreat behind the furnace," I said to the cook. "Bullets will be flying presently."

I had grown quite cool by this time, or, at least, my nerves were better ordered. To my surprise the man shook his head and quietly fetched out a great knife.

"We are a' in the same box," he said resolutely, "and why should I no do my part?"

I had not considered it in that light before, but was only too glad of his aid. All this had passed, as I might say, in a twinkling, though I have spun out some words in describing it. The men in the forecastle began shouting and cursing, and for a moment showed their ugly faces in the door, but the captain's long sword made them pause. This could not last. Two or three wheeled about, and I heard them slapping up the ladder. It seemed to me also that the rearmost of the soldiers were retreating.

"Deil tak the airn-pots!" growled Mac Ivrach. "They hae broucht aboot this banchle! Their craving ballies couldna bide till the mess."

"Listen, friends," said Mr. Tym without turning his head. "We must fetch this thing to a close. In a moment they will have firearms, and it will be too late. I see no hope except that the captain and I may stand them off till you, Ardick, with Mac Ivrach retreat to the raft. That done, we will make a diversion and attempt to join you."

"It shall be done, sir," said I promptly. I was so high in my courage on this point that I was ready to remain and take a hand in the brush, were that advisable.

"Get you upon the raft," I said hurriedly to Mac Ivrach. "I will cast off and follow."

"Vera gude," he answered coolly, and slipped through the port. I was about to follow, for the time indeed pressed, when the fellows in the forecastle gave a triumphant shout.

"They have pistols!" cried the captain warningly. "They are going to shoot!"

The frail bulkhead was no barrier to bullets, and I threw myself flat. As I did so I saw Mr. Tym drop to all fours.

Two heavy reports followed, and the smoke drove in at the doorway. I scrambled to my feet and had Mr. Tym instantly in my eye. He was straightening up and glancing around. The captain was close behind him, but sitting flat with his knee cradled in his hands.

"They have disabled me. Fly!" I heard him say, and with that men burst in at both entrances.

I can not pretend to give clear details of what followed. Mr. Tym lunged back desperately, and I saw one fellow double up and fall. The next man tripped over him and the supercargo improved the time to wheel and rush to my side.

"Out!" was the one word he said, and I let go the painter and sprang upon the ledge of the port. As the end of the line whisked clear I stooped and shot headlong down.

CHAPTER XIII.

OF A MYSTERIOUS DECREE OF FATE.

I ROSE to the surface at once and shook the water from my eyes. The first thing I saw was the great impending bulk of the ship. It towered far over me, and was rushing past, flooding back frothing and divided seas. I fought my way to the top of the next crest and looked around. To my joy Mr. Tym was close at hand, spitting and shaking his head, as though he had just come up from his dive, but riding lightly and easily. Turning my head to see what had become of Mac Ivrach and the raft, I saw the structure pitching up and down on a neighbouring sea, but to my sorrow without the Scotchman.

In the line of the raft, but near a mile away, was the pursuing ship. She was a bad mess forward, for her sprit-topmast had been shot away, and some of the litter was dragging over the bows.

I had time for no more than this flash of a look

about. All my attention was now upon the rushing bulk of the ship. She was so near that I could see little higher than her bulwarks. Her ports on that side were open, though the guns had not been used, and in each opening were the protruding heads of the gunners.

I thought some shouted at us, and certainly a few gesticulated, but whether in anger or astonishment, or both, I could not tell. They were by in a moment, and immediately we were passing under the towering height of the poop. Now came the critical moment, for we were about to shoot out clear, and there could scarce be a doubt that we should be saluted with a shower of balls. That we had not already been made targets of was beyond peradventure because the Governor and Captain Placido were busied with more pressing matters. Now the great strain was relaxed, for the buccaneer had as good as given over the chase, and we might expect to prove the accuracy of the Spanish aim.

The ship seemed to lift away from us, and at once we got the range of her whole side. To my dismay all the bulwarks were overhung with heads, and a dozen or more of the steel-shelled guards showed above the low poop rail. The story of our doings had spread over the ship at last, and doubtless the angry dons were primed for vengeance.

There seemed to be nothing that we could do, unless it was to dive, as they made to fire, and that would be likely to prove of little avail. Our main hope must be in the poorness of their aim and the little time we should be within range. I did not forget also that our bobbing heads presented rather in-

ferior targets. They let go soon enough, for I had scarce gotten the whole range of the side when a score or more of guns and pistols were aimed, some from as far forward as amidships, and a blaze along the whole line followed.

I dove, though of necessity not far, and when I put my head out again the volley was over. A glance showed Mr. Tym, seemingly unharmed, and the ship swiftly receding.

"Poor shooting, sir!" I shouted, not a little relieved and even exhilarated.

"They will try to amend it," he called back. "My eyes are not good at this distance. Are not those the grandees concentrating on the poop?"

"Aye, it is so," I answered after a look. "Will they join in this business?"

"I think so," he returned, "and mayhap do a little cannon shooting."

This was not very enlivening, but the fact was less so, for the bright line of figures seemed steady for an instant, and half a dozen muskets were deliberately pointed and fired.

One or two shots came close, for though I dove I was aware of a flurry in the water near me, and when my head came out Mr. Tym was looking anxiously my way.

"Not hurt?" he asked.

"Nay," I answered, "but it was rather close. They have not harmed you?"

"Not a whit."

"Shall we swim for the raft?"

"Aye, for I am growing weary."

We turned as he spoke, and to my astonishment

there was the raft close at hand. For some reason it had come before the wind faster than I could have calculated, and was ready now as a very timely refuge.

We disregarded further danger from the shooting and faced about. The raft came on, climbing a crest at the moment and riding swiftly down again, and it was then that both of us cried out in amazement. For a human head was sticking above the stern end, and a familiar shock of light hair, albeit now darkened a little with the wet, covered the head. In a word, it was the worthy cook.

"Ise be there in a blink," he called. "Dinna ye waste your strangth."

We gave over further effort, accordingly, and directly the affair rode down to us. I was the first out of the water, and gave Mr. Tym a pull, after which Mac Ivrach himself crawled out.

"I was no liking to be sae fair a target," he said composedly, "though yon callants are overpoor marksmen."

We seized his hand and shook it heartily.

"And you saw us, and urged the raft along?" I said. "Seasonably done, for we were like to be weary ere we fetched it."

"A gun!" cried Mr. Tym.

Not one cannon, but several seemed to be pointed and were rapidly fired. Luckily their aim was poor, and nothing more than a fuss here and there in the water resulted. We began to be still further encouraged.

"Is not the buccaneer recovering himself in some sort?" inquired Mr. Tym, after a moment or two.

I rose as high as my knees and took a shrewd look.

"Aye, he has got the greater part of the mess cleared away, and holds on his course," I answered. "Ah, me! if the poor captain were but with us!" I added with a sigh.

"Nay, but we will ransom him, or deliver him in some fashion," said Mr. Tym cheerfully. "The Governor is stern and hath a Spanish temper, but I think will not misuse him."

"Would I felt assured of it!" I replied. "Moreover, there is his wound. At best I fear they will prove careless leeches."

"Mither o' God! he will never need leech mair!" burst out Mac Ivrach. "Look yonner!"

We had taken our eyes for a moment from the Pilanca, but at this dreadful exclamation half sprang up and turned that way. What we saw struck the blood from our cheeks, and left us silent with consternation. The ship had fetched, perhaps, two points to the wind, so that again we had an oblique view of her side, and a scene on her main deck was brought to view. A group of figures there moved, and in the instant a single shape rose above their heads and travelled up swiftly to the main yardarm! There it seemed to dangle for a moment, and then fell into the motion of the ship, and swung pendulum-like, in board and out.

It was a time of horror, and I scarce know what we said. We had no doubt that the man was the captain, for who else could be executed at such a time? Moreover, when I came to look more intently, I made out a patch of white about the upper part of

his figure, which would answer for the captain's shirt, none of the crew wearing a garment of that description, but only blouses and dark tunics.

We crouched low again, and watched the poor body as it jerked and swung. There was a dreadful fascination in the sight, and for one I could not take my eyes from it. I have the thought that the supercargo broke out a-swearing once, not loud, but as I might say between his teeth, and that I laughed savagely when I heard him. Truth is, I was well-nigh worn out with what I had been through, and such things as occurred in those few minutes come back to me in confused fashion, almost as one recalls a dream.

The buccaneer continued to bear down upon us, and as soon as he was within reasonable signalling distance Mac Ivrach took off his waistcoat and waved it. It was as large a distress flag as we had, for all of us were without coats.

Nearer he came, and at last his broad bow, with its stump of the spritsail mast, was close at hand. A crowd of figures showed above the low bulwark of the foredeck, and I looked excitedly till one of them should hail. It was only a moment. A man in a cuirass and headpiece, standing by the weather shrouds, leaned over and put his hand to his mouth.

"Raft ahoy!"

Oh, what a brave, homelike hail it was, to be sure! Every word English!

I sprang to my feet, all the old strength of my voice returned.

"'Board the ship!" I roared back. "We are

English!" It was surely unnecessary now to tell him that we were in distress.

There was a stir in the group. Whether they caught the very words was doubtful, as the brisk wind was against us, but the import, I doubted not, they understood.

"We will luff!" shouted the man back. "Be ready to catch a line!"

"Aye, aye!" I returned.

She came into the wind, and while her bows beat up a great smother of foam and her sails flapped and thundered, the line snaked out and I seized it and made it fast. We were hauled rapidly in, and a dozen strong, sunburned hands helped us scramble up the side.

"Square the yards!" roared the same voice that had hailed me.

Men knocked by me to the after braces, and I was too confused to get out of the way, sailor though I was.

"Well, and how is it with you now?" asked a new and quiet voice, and I started and stared like a fool, for the owner of the voice was Nicholas Pradey!

CHAPTER XIV.

OF THE DOING ON THE BUCCANEER.

Mr. Tym had waited for me, having gained a step in advance, but the rush over the crowded deck had pressed him back. He was not at my side, therefore, when the villain addressed his question to me.

For the life of me I could not lay instant hold of the word to answer. The surprise, the feeling that fate had played us a trick, something like the suggestion that the rogue was destined, in spite of all, to triumph—these mingled impressions confused me and held the words back on my lips.

But all was the business of an instant, and by that time Mr. Tym was at my elbow. He had made out the villain, though it seemed he had not caught the exact purport of the inquiry. He drew himself up sternly and looked the fellow in the face.

"What may be your question, sir? I trust it may be such that the answer can be brief."

Pradey coolly took off his steel headpiece and ran his fingers through his hair. He looked really soldierlike in cuirass, buff-coat, jack boots, and long sword.

"Nay," he answered leisurely, "your manner is a bit stiff and unfriendly. Best take some further consideration, and then we will discourse. Meanwhile you have wants that shall be attended to. We can fit you and Master Ardick, here, as well as this good fellow, with drier clothes than you have. Lieutenant Phibbert!"

A big fellow in steel headpiece and body armour, but otherwise in ordinary sea habit, pushed out of the crowd. I recognised him as the man who had hailed us.

"Have these people below. Bestow this one in the vacant berth off the cabin, and find the others bunks in the steerage. Ask Lieutenant Niles for a shift for this gentleman—I opine they are near the same bigness,—and have the slop chest overhauled for Master

Ardick and the other. In truth," he concluded, with a cold grin, "we do our calling no discredit in bestowing this hospitality, for I can aver that these two, at least, are rare fighting men!"

I glanced irresolutely at Mr. Tym. It was a strange tack that this singular rogue had fetched upon. He was surely in authority, and doubtless meant to treat us well, for the present at least, and the question was, should we attempt to stand out against him? In what sort could we behave if we refused his offers?

Mr. Tym puffed out his lips and sucked them back, as his habit was when perplexed or in thought, and after a glance at me answered:

"Speaking for myself, I would choose to have as little as possible between us; yet I acknowledge we are not wholly in case to refuse your offers. Let our absolute needs be met, then, since it must be so, but ask us not—I am sure I speak for Master Ardick as well as for myself—ask us not to exchange more than the strictest need of words with you. Further, I refuse your offer of the cabin, and would be sent forward with my friends."

Pradey clapped on his headpiece, the sort of jeering good nature, if I may so term it, dying out of his look.

"Be it so; I care not how you have it. Go where you wish, and be as mum as you like. I make but the one condition—you and the others shall blab nothing of old matters. At a later time I will send for you."

"Well," said Mr. Tym, "we are conformable to that, are we not, friends?"

Both Mac Ivrach and I assented.

"Get refreshment, then," said Pradey, turning away, "and at a proper season you shall be summoned."

The lieutenant stood forward, and we made to follow him, but ere we did so I ran one keen glance around.

This new deck was small, and, by contrast with the Pilanca, seemed almost to belong to a mere Channel lugger. The poop was low, and the bows proportionally even lower, and the bulwarks were nowhere above a man's breast. And these moderate limits held a crew in contrast to anything I had seen before. I think every man was on deck. Many of the faces were English, but there were French, Dutch, Swedes, and I know not what besides. With the rest were a few negroes, and I saw some of those dusky, fierce countenances—Moors and the like—that one meets in the Mediterranean trade. Their dress was as varied as their faces. Sober coats, brilliant tunics, the rough sea rig of the Scandinavian sailor side by side with the dirty cotton shirt of the bare-armed negro. After the same sort were their weapons. Swords, scimitars, Indian axes, daggers of every shape and length, matchlocks, snaphances, ancient wheel locks, blunderbusses, pistols—I have not time to go over the list. In defensive armour alone was there some approach to uniformity. Except a few East Indian casques and two or three old-fashioned, lobster-tail helmets, I saw only modern headpieces, and the score or so of men who wore body armour were equipped with well-conditioned breast and back plates. Of cannon there were not fewer than fifteen

or sixteen in sight, though most were of small calibre, and a great bundle of pikes was disposed near the neighbouring mast.

I passed quick opinion upon the whole sight, both men and arms, which was that all was formidable enough, and yet less than I had supposed in the matter of modernness and uniformity of weapons.

I concluded my look around by dwelling an instant on the escaping Pilanca, and there the same mournful spectacle met my eyes as before. The body of the poor captain still dangled from the yard-arm, only now, to be sure, reduced small, and certain only as to outline. The Pilanca herself was drawing away, her course a little west of south, and all her canvas full. I could now detect, in a way, what her injury was, which proved to be a shattered mizzen-topmast. It would have been enough, indeed, to have worked her considerable harm, only that her course was what it was and that the buccaneer had been worse dealt with.

I saw that Mr. Tym's look travelled the same way as mine, and he, too, dwelt for an instant on the receding Spaniard and the grim shape swinging aloft, but no word passed between us. As for Mac Ivrach, who had been overshadowed in these doings, he looked vastly boxed about and puzzled, but asked no questions.

We followed on dripping in the wake of the lieutenant, and were had down the companion to a plainly furnished cabin.

"Stand by and I will see what can be found to thaw the cockles," said the lieutenant.

He fetched us to at the table and took from a locker

hard by a hospitable-looking black bottle. Glasses were in the rack overhead, and he filled four and bade us toss off. It proved to be very good sack, and was most acceptable, chilled and weary as we were. The lieutenant kept us company, and, when we had all emptied a second of the small glasses, he opened the low door leading into the 'tween-decks, and piloted us along to the steerage. As the ship carried no cargo all this space was given up to sleeping accommodations, but in truth there was no room to spare, as the company was so great. There were bunks and hammocks, and clothes hanging on pegs, till the place seemed like the berth-deck of a royal ship. The steerage was only a moderate space, and was partly filled with coils of rigging, spare spars and the like, yet was no bad or uncomfortable berth. There were five or six bunks besides ours, and we judged by the sailor's rig about them that all were in use. Of course the chief part of the light and air came in from ports, and of these there were four, but two were pretty well taken up by cannon.

The lieutenant, who, like most big, fleshy men, seemed rather good-natured, and who might have been made more so by the wine, bade us find places and make ourselves at home, and withdrew to hunt up the clothes. These came in due time, not ill-fitting sea rigs, but better than we expected, Mr. Tym's, in particular, very trim and decent.

While we were shifting we relieved Mac Ivrach's curiosity by telling him into whose hands we had fallen. After concluding, we all agreed that we could do no more now than to conduct ourselves

quietly, treating the buccaneers in a civil manner, and beyond that must wait for Pradey's disclosure. What that might be we hazarded some guesses about, but, of course, could resolve nothing certain.

We rested for a little, and then had the curiosity to go back to the deck, finding, however, nothing of moment happening. Pradey had managed to step a kind of jury sprit-topmast, and we were driving along very fairly, still holding the Pilanca well in sight, but now without much hope, as I thought, of catching her. She had come a bit nearer the wind, it seemed, and this alone fearfully handicapped us, forcing us, as it did, to a greater use of our make-shift spritsail.

We did not specially avoid Pradey, and, indeed, secretly hoped that he would be out with his communication, so that we could tell what to depend upon, but somewhat to our disappointment he made no sign. We talked a little, but guardedly with the crew, explaining briefly, in answer to their questions, how our adventure occurred, but going into nothing of moment.

The rest of the afternoon passed, and at supper time there was no important change in the situation. The Black Eagle, as our ship was named, very nearly held her own, but carrying fully as much canvas forward as the present wind and her weak, patched-up mast warranted. Supper was served both below and on deck, and we chose ours in the latter place, our mess-tub being shared in common with an Englishman, two Swedes, and a negro. The Englishman was a short, broad, strong young fellow, rather well-favoured, except that his nose was broken, and not

ill-natured, though shocking in all his discourse. His name—for aught I know, not the true one—he gave to us as Paul Cradde. I think he was the most profane man I ever saw, scarce a word coming out but it must be driven home with an oath, and all his thoughts were on the wicked and especially the lewd things he had done and meant to do. To be just to the others of the mess, they were quieter, and nothing so offensive, though their thoughts might have been black enough.

We found the fare very good—far beyond what it would be on any merchant ship, and certainly better than it was or is in the royal navy,—and everything washed down with plenty of wine and ale.

The meal over, we lounged about the deck, and finally repaired to the midships weather rail, which we overhung, watching the chase and talking. Pradey at last took in all but his chief sails, the wind now seriously threatening the weak forward spars, and the canvas there was shortened in proportion. It seemed to us now that he must have given up all hope of overhauling the Pilanca, but as yet he made no move to change his course.

Evening came, and by that time the Pilanca had edged more to the west. In fact, she now had the wind but a few points abaft the beam. Presently there was some indication of Pradey's purpose, for he stirred nothing to imitate the other's movement, and we easily guessed that he had given over the chase.

The moon rose, and we continued to hang about that part of the deck. All about us the lights of the men's pipes sprang up, and the scene was like a

bivouac, with the groups of recumbent figures and the glancing of arms.

Only a small number of persons, as I found, were appointed for a watch. The rest idled about or went below as they pleased. As yet there was no particular disorder among them, and no fighting or noticeable drunkenness.

As the moon rose higher, the sea came out in a glitter, giving a faint, white toss of crests in the broad moon road, and elsewhere fetching out little more than the regular roll and upheave, while there was gradually cut a clearer and more distinct rim around the eastern sea-line. In the southwest were the white, glistening sails of the Pilanca, now to appearances not over two or three miles away, but in reality twice that, and otherwise all about was a clear seaboard.

We were together at the rail, talking in subdued voices, and, what with the poor captain's death and the things that had happened to us, to a certain degree fallen into a little melancholy, when Mr. Tym's name was spoken, and we turned to behold Pradey.

"Well, sir," said the rascal in an amicable voice, "I trust you and your friends here find yourselves in better spirits than you were. I have a bit of leisure at this time, and if you are ready we will have the discourse I spoke of."

We were quite willing to hear him, and readily said so, and he bade us follow him to the cabin.

At last it seemed that we might resolve something definite out of all this tangle.

CHAPTER XV.

OF THE BARGAIN WITH PRADEY.

THE cabin was vacant, as we discovered by the aid of the single small lamp. Pradey signed us to seats on the lockers, and himself took a place at the end of the table, with his back to his own stateroom. A sword hung on a nail hard by, and as he had a pistol in his belt I surmised that he intended to guard against a surprise. As we had dropped our swords when we left the ship, and our pistols had been wet and were not yet in order, I conceived that he was well enough secured in his purpose.

"I do not purpose to waste time in boxing the compass," he began as soon as we were seated, "but will be at the bottom of the business at once. You see me in command of this tidy ship, and I will inform you, if you do not know, that she belongs to Captain Henry Morgan's fleet of special commissioners. Now I conceive I need not spin out an argument to convince you that your future must depend upon my friendship."

He paused, as though expecting some sort of reply, and Mr. Tym said briefly.

"And if so, what then?"

"Why, then," he went on a little sharply, "it behooves you to do all in your power to please me, and move me to further kindness. Look you! I have little cause to love you, and yet, on easy conditions, I will overlook all. Say that you will join me, and swear to reveal nothing of the old matters, and I

will pardon the ill you have done me, and stand your friend. In this offer I include your companion, who, I presume, is posted as to our past relations."

I can not say that I had conceived anything like this, and yet I was not struck with very great surprise. It seemed pretty evident that Pradey could not so well dispose of us as to win us over, if that might be. His crew, though desperate enough, did not precisely sail under the black flag, and to butcher us in cold blood would make a very stirring bit of talk that would be like to trouble him in the future. If Morgan indeed held a royal commission, then his deeds, and those of his captains, must not be altogether lawless, and he must not have too much blood of his own countrymen on his hands. Provided that Pradey had found a way to silence the fellows from the Industry, he had only to win us over, and he might return even to England in safety. But as to complying with his proposition, that was another matter, and one which had more sides than I could turn about and come to a decision on in a moment. Nor did Mr. Tym, bold and resolute as he was, attempt a full and conclusive answer. He glanced at Mac Ivrach and me, and, finding that we wore doubtful expressions, made, for him, a very cautious reply.

"We have heard you, Master Pradey," he said, "and while I, speaking for myself, hesitate not to reject one part of your proposition—to wit, that we should join your ship's company—still there are other points in the matter that require thought."

"Well, I will not press you," said Pradey rather mildly, "and you may have till morning for the answer. As to the matter of joining this especial ship,

I care not whether you do so or take service on some other. I lost three men by the Pilanca's cannonade, and would take some little pride in returning with the number good, but that is the limit of the matter. What would serve my turn would be to bring to Morgan's service three good men, and especially to secure a person of your talents, Mr. Tym, for there is a dearth of such, as I am free to confess."

"That manner of talk is wasted," said Mr. Tym coldly. "Should we decide to join Captain Morgan, it would not be to win renown in fighting, but rather to assure our passage home, as well as to strike a few fair blows in avenging the death of poor Captain Sellinger."

"Captain Morgan would not stay to question your motives so you struck the blows you speak of," answered Pradey. "But fail not to remember," he added with a significant look, "that all this is to be brought about for a consideration. I shall not suffer you to have the sole end of the bargain."

"We apprehend you," said Mr. Tym briefly.

"Meanwhile," said I, thinking it a good time to settle one point, "be pleased to tell us how it came about that we find you here? Also what has become of your companions?"

"Why, that is a short story," said Pradey with one of his cold grins. "The night of the day we left you it fell quite dark, and the watch having fortified his courage with spirits, suffered himself to fall asleep, and a ship coming up ran us down. Some were killed outright and others drowned, and in the end I was the only one saved. The ship was a buccaneer, one of those cruisers sent out by Morgan, and was so un-

fortunate as to have just lost her captain. He had been killed in a wrangle with the first lieutenant, and the latter had then been shot in turn by one of the crew. As no person was left aboard who understood navigation, and as I made no scruple to put myself forward, I was soon chosen captain, and when this was settled we stood away to rejoin the fleet. We shortly came up with it, when Captain Morgan was pleased to confirm me in my place. About this time news was received of the sailing of the Pilanca, with the Governor of Panama on board, and while most of the squadron stood for St. Catherine's, three of us were despatched to intercept the don. I was the only one fated to fall in with him, and it seems that I have come rather disastrously off. I think you now have the whole story, unless it be that I forgot to tell Morgan and the rest quite all that had formerly happened to me, but spun a yarn about my ship taking fire and we poor creatures barely whipping off at short notice, the others miserably perishing."

"Well, sir, I thank you for the story," said I, "and, in truth, I am sorry for the poor sailors, particularly for Lewson."

"And now," he said, "you might give me, in return, an account of your own faring. Surely, when I looked over the rail to-day and saw your familiar faces I was not a little astonished."

"As were we to see you," said I, "but, after all, it was a simple matter"; and with this I went on and related our story.

"At least there are those that are not born to be be drowned," he said laughing, "my worthy self included. Well, go now and think over the other mat-

ter. Let me know when you have come to a resolution."

We took ourselves off accordingly, and returned to the deck.

"Let us go into the top," said Mr. Tym aside, "where we can be sure of privacy;" and as the officer of the watch seemed to be indifferent we climbed into the main shrouds and swung into the opening in the barricade.

"Well, friends," said Mr. Tym, as soon as we were secure in our places, "what think you of all we have heard?"

Mac Ivrach looked at me to answer, and with a little hesitation I said:

"But for the matter of covering the rogue's crime I should be for accepting his terms. I should count it no such dreadful thing to join the buccaneers, though once, I admit, I thought otherwise, and this sentiment is stronger since the death of the poor captain."

Mr. Tym nodded. "Aye, that is my reasoning," he said. "Moreover, it seems that Morgan does really bear a commission from the King. Pradey, as well as all before, speaks very confidently of it; so we may be pretty sure of the legality of the thing. But the villain's old offence—that is the stick!"

Here Mac Ivrach, who had been giving close heed, put in a word:

"Is there no a middle course? I tak' it the man micht listen to a bit compromise."

"As what?" said I. "Remember that he doubtless has in mind to secure a rich plunder, and then return to England. Else he would either murder us

now, risking the consequences, or would give no heed to us at all, not caring what we did."

"Aweel," said the cook, scratching his head, "and granting that be sae, he maun still mak' the best o' the hale situation. If it's neither streek our craigs nor cut our thrapples, he maun deal his best wi' living men. I hae no muckle contrivance, but I wad be thinking there suld be a term."

"Well, maybe there is wit in that," said Mr. Tym, brightening a little. "He would not murder us, as you say, and so must make the best terms he can. And yet, it would not be safe to put much strain upon him. We know he is a desperate rascal, and void of any manner of conscience. But to the idea. Prick up your wits, Ardick. What would be some feasible compromise?"

I had been thinking fast since the Scotchman spoke.

"I can not say," I replied; "I have nothing clear, and yet—— Stay! How as to a compromise in time? Say we would agree—under this stress—to cover the villainy for a period?"

"I distrust it," said Mr. Tym, shaking his head. "Besides, Pradey would never consent."

"But there is more to the matter," I went on, coming to a clearer conception of the thought myself as I talked. "As you say, he is desperate and void of all conscience. Could we trust him, in any case?"

"Why, no," he answered, a little perplexed; "but what then?"

"Will he trust us, in turn? The base are always suspicious. Think you not he will seek to make

'way with us, pledge ourselves as we may? Then why would he not agree to the compromise? Say we would swear to be secret till the end of the expedition? He would consent, I think, meaning to destroy us at the first opportunity."

"In truth, there is weight in what you say," said Mr. Tym, beginning to waver. "Aye, doubtless you have the rights of it," he added almost immediately. "Let us try it, then, for I think we are like to do no better. What say you, Mac Ivrach?"

"It's a gude plan," said the cook, "sae the auld villain will consent."

"Let us test it," I said. "Nothing is to be gained by waiting."

My companions agreed, and we accordingly went below and sought Pradey. He was on the quarter-deck, and went aside with us, upon which Mr. Tym made the proposition.

The fellow heard it with contracted brows and a lowering look. Instead of answering at once he took a turn across the deck, stopping a moment at the other rail, and bowing his head, as in thought. Presently he returned, his look less harsh and the lines of his sunken mouth relaxed.

"Now here is a shrewd trick of bargaining," he began. "How you must have overhauled your brains to compass it! You would make a compact to last to a dot as long as your necks are in danger. Well, well, it may be all that I could have expected of you and I will not balk at it. Let us fetch the matter to a head, then. You will swear to me to impart nothing whatever of the matters concerning the mutiny, neither to Morgan nor to any person, till

such a time as you shall take ship for England. In return I shall do you no harm, and shall recommend you for places in Morgan's company or some other. Is this as you would have it?"

"Why, yes," said Mr. Tym, who looked a little surprised at the ease of the victory. "You ratify this, friends?"

Mac Ivrach and I promptly assented.

"And you swear accordingly?" went on Pradey.

"We do," the three of us replied.

"As do I, for my part," he said with a satisfied nod. "You are now safe, and I am free of my complications. Thus all ends well."

He smiled blandly, and I supposed the interview was over, but Mr. Tym, it seemed, would have a question.

"What is our present destination?" he inquired.

"Chagre," replied Pradey promptly; "but first I will run a bit to the eastward," he added, "hoping to fall in with a homeward-bound Spaniard. Such a one might deem it a favourable time to slip out of some Cuban port."

Mr. Tym thanked him for the information, and we returned to our own parts of the ship.

"It is clear," said I, as soon as we had withdrawn a little and could exchange a word in private, "that Pradey has fetched around, as we guessed. He has tied our tongues for the present, and before they shall be loosed again means to stop them forever."

"Aye, 'tis so, indeed," replied Mr. Tym, "and we must henceforth be on our guard. He is dangerous to the limit of his ability."

It was now well into the evening, and as we had

settled our plans and were weary we gave over further discussion and went below. We took the precaution to secure the door leading aft, and obtained from the broken-nosed Cradde ammunition wherewith to recharge our pistols. This done, we threw off our coats and shoes, and I, for my part, was speedily asleep.

CHAPTER XVI.

OF THE BRAVE NEWS AT CHAGRE.

We awoke the next morning much refreshed, and likewise in improved spirits. Our mates of the steerage were all on deck, and we had an opportunity for a little comforting talk. Taking everything into account, our prospects were not, after all, so very bad. The main question was how to outwit the treacherous and dangerous Pradey.

When we reached the deck we found the ship making but a small headway, the wind having much declined. Indeed, it soon fell to a calm. We looked vainly for the Pilanca, for she had clean dropped us, nor was any other bit of canvas in sight. Well to the south the seaboard was broken, for there we made out what must be land, and on inquiry were told it was one of the northernmost of the Windward Islands. Our course was now due west, and Lieutenant Phibbert told us we were to continue till we raised Cuba. If we fell in with no prize by that time, he said, we should stand directly for Chagre.

It was not long before even the light breeze died

away, and we had a dead calm. The ship lifted and sank on the swell, and the bright sun, coming out of a thin haze, poured down with fierce heat. After a while this changed, a dark cloud rose to windward, and we had a sharp squall. All this was true tropical weather, and was such as we might expect for some time to come. It certainly prolonged the period of our strain and uncertainty, and for that cause was decidedly unwelcome. At last we picked up a northeasterly wind again, and held it till the night of the second day, when it once more failed us. All this time we had raised no sail, and the men were becoming restless and discontented. They had prolonged the cruise to the limit of their desires, and on the morning of the third day a knot of them went to Pradey and besought him to fetch without more ado for Chagre. We were now to the northwest of Hispaniola, and so could not immediately stand south, but after a little hesitation Pradey decided to humour them, and as soon as we had cleared the land did so, and we fetched through the passage between Hispaniola and Cuba. At last we stood to accomplish something of a definite nature, and my companions and I were proportionally rejoiced.

We had an easy voyage across the Caribbean, and finally made the landfall of the Isthmus. All was now stir and excitement, for we could not say how matters had gone, nor whether Morgan and his fleet were here before us. It was approaching nightfall as we drew in, and it would be a hard matter to determine much without standing dangerously near, but Pradey did not flinch. The wind was almost from the north, but he coolly held his

course, taking a desperado's chance of getting out again, and so the Black Eagle drove down till we were within range of the glass.

My companions and I (now all armed, and each furnished with a serviceable cuirass) stood near the break of the quarter-deck, and watched with eagerness the motions of the lookouts. One fellow was as high as the fore-topgallant yard, and another a little below. The first had a glass.

Presently this fellow hailed the deck.

"What do you see?" bawled Pradey.

"There are seven or eight ships," was the answer, "and all lying well in by the castle."

"Are they big?"

"It might be that half are of the size of this, and the rest less."

"Do you make out much of the castle and the surroundings?" inquired Pradey.

"It looks like a strong place," answered the sailor. "It tops the hill, and there is some other work at the foot."

Pradey talked a little with Phibbert. Presently he went up to see for himself. At the masthead he stopped and levelled his glass.

"There springs up a light," I said, pointing to the now fast-rising crest of the hill.

As I spoke two or three more glimmers appeared, but lower down. The short tropic sunset was now over, and comparative darkness was at hand. We stirred not tack nor sheet, but held sturdily on, and at last the outlines of the castle were clear to the unassisted eye.

First Pradey and then the lookouts came down,

and Phibbert went aft, and he and the captain talked briefly together. The wind now abated a little as the light failed, and our speed proportionally slackened.

"I fear he stands fair to fall into a trap," said I uneasily to my companions. "Will he still hold on?"

"I think not much farther," said Mr. Tym, but he spoke with no great tone of confidence.

A half mile, it might be more, and then Pradey called Phibbert and gave an order.

The lieutenant leaped upon a gun.

"Ready at the braces!" he roared.

The men rushed to obey. The captain then signed to the helmsman, and as soon as he had shouted "Helm's a-lee!" the lieutenant followed with the other orders, and the ship rode gracefully round. At the right moment the yards were ordered, and speedily we were sawing up and down, very comfortably hove to.

This was a relief to me, for I could not guess where the audacity of Pradey might carry him, and I had no mind to fall again into Spanish hands.

"I think he will drift in for a little," said Mr. Tym, "for the wind and some sort of current, or the tide, are moving us quite briskly, and if we then discover nothing he will stand out again and send a boat."

This proved to be the very thing that Pradey had in mind. We advanced quite steadily and perceptibly, and the dark outreach of the land, set off here and there with its twinklings, grew more and more distinct. The ships, too, seemed to have hung out

riding lights, and these glimmered from the comparative obscurity at the foot of the hill. But now this manœuvre, too, was growing dangerous, and again I hoped the audacious Pradey would not carry his hardihood too far. Already I feared he might not be able to claw off should sudden need arise.

"Ah, look yonner!" exclaimed Mac Ivrach suddenly. He pointed to a spot a little to the east of the hill. There, in a kind of clear space brought out by a glinting streak of the failing light, I saw a small boat. It was moving seaward, and was already nearly abreast of the ship.

"We should tell the captain," I said. "Maybe that will be what he seeks."

"Vera weel," answered the cook.

He stepped toward the poop accordingly, but at that moment Pradey himself made the discovery.

"Boat!" he sang out, wheeling sharply round. "Master Phibbert, get way on the ship!"

"A fisher," said an old buccaneer near me. "It is the very chance the captain was tarrying for."

It seemed so, indeed, and again I began to think I had underrated Pradey's sagacity. In a moment the ship was ready to come about.

The head sheets were let go.

"Raise tacks and sheets!" shouted Pradey.

The braces were handled in their turn, and the forward yards came round.

"Haul aft the main sheet!" cried Pradey again.

I glanced toward the boat. I thought she had taken the alarm, for now she was showing a narrow rake of her side, as though she had begun to make for the shore.

The other orders were quickly completed. The ship's head rode gallantly round, and she was laid fairly for the chase. The wind was too light for much speed, and as the boat had a good start and her haven was near the result must at first be doubtful.

"I'll have her if I ground the ship," growled Pradey. He hung over the rail as he spoke and pulled a pistol from his belt.

But at this point the fellows in the boat seemed to lose heart. They shouted something and their little sail collapsed. As we drove down upon them I made out three men, all half naked, and, as well as I could tell in the obscurity, Indians or negroes.

"Boat ahoy!" shouted Pradey. He spoke in Spanish.

"Board the ship!" bawled back one of the men.

"I am going to luff. Fetch up by me."

"Yes, señor," answered the same voice.

As the ship came into the wind the boat approached the quarter.

"What news ashore?" asked Pradey hurriedly.

"Why, señor, the English have taken the castle," answered the man.

At this we all broke into a great shout.

"The governor and many soldiers were killed," went on the man, "and all of us poor people terribly frightened."

"Enough!" cried Pradey impatiently. "To the braces, men! Master Phibbert, lay our course for the castle."

The blackamoors hastily shook out their sail and stood away, and we came upon the other tack. De-

spite the confidence with which Pradey seemed to proceed I could not but await the conclusion of the business with a little anxiety. After all, it might be a trap. The men, indeed, hushed the loudness of their talk, and we drove on toward the glimmering castle in something like a hush of suspense.

CHAPTER XVII.

OF THINGS ASHORE.

At last Pradey gave the word, and once more the Black Eagle was fetched into the wind. A cable had been prepared to slip, and one of the anchors was immediately let go. Sail was clewed up but not furled, and when ammunition had been served out to the men and all the cannon prepared for instant use we were in case either to fight or to fly. We were near enough to the castle by this time, so that a shot from one of its heavy guns might reach us, but otherwise there was no present risk.

Everything had been managed as quietly as possible, and there was no hint, from any sign on shore, that we had been perceived.

Pradey spoke to the first lieutenant, and one of the quarter boats was lowered.

"Take her, lieutenant, pick two men for a crew, and see what you can learn," said Pradey briefly.

"Aye, aye, sir," answered Phibbert.

"If all is well fire two successive pistol shots; if we have been cheated, one," pursued Pradey.

Phibbert again assented, and hastily picked out

his men and got away. We watched them anxiously as long as we could see them, which was only a few moments, as they speedily entered the shadows of the river's mouth and under the dark foot of the mountain. It was again a time of strained waiting, but not for long, as, much before I was expecting anything, a sharp report, and then another came out of the obscurity.

The men broke into a tremendous cheer, and instantly the decks awoke to life. The question was settled. The castle was ours.

Every one was speedily in the shrouds or hanging over the bulwarks, so eager were all to get the first word of the news.

A light came lifting and sinking toward us, and we perceived that Phibbert had set off a lanthorn. Pradey thereupon hung two answering lights over the stern. In a moment we made out the dusky shape of the boat and the indistinct, swaying figures of the men at the oars. Then the light shot up, and we saw Phibbert on his feet holding it.

"A—ll—s well!" he cried as the boat broke out into our light. "The castle is ours."

Then the men thundered out into another cheer, and several excitable ones cut two or three steps of a dance.

Phibbert and his boat's crew came gaily up the side, and were immediately beset with a multitude of questions. The very moderate discipline that prevailed on board was quite overridden for the instant.

"Belay jaw tackle, will you? You shall have it all in a moment," protested the lieutenant. "Come,

this isn't shipshape," he went on. "Back with you! Clear the quarter-deck."

With some growling and swearing, but all done with no heat, the men at last obeyed.

"Now, sir," said Phibbert, turning to Pradey and touching his headpiece, "I have the honour to report. Captain Brodely, with three hundred men, holds the castle. The governor and most of his command are dead, and we have captured above fifty cannon, six or eight pipes of muskets, the value of four or five thousand pounds in treasure, and a goodly store of provisions."

"Excellent!" cried Pradey in high good humour. "And St. Catherine's? Since Brodely is here, I trow the chief remained there—which is to say, he took it?"

"He did, indeed, sir," answered Phibbert, "but he is not a way to remain there long. Brodely has despatched the news to him, and he must soon come."

"By what means did you learn all this?"

"Very easily, sir. We had scarce entered the mouth of the river when I descried the bulk of a little ship, which I made up to, and at once found to be the Tempest. You know she was De Bouvard's vessel. I thought that settled it, but to be sure I slipped a little nearer, and was thereupon hailed. The voice was English, and I made bold to answer. Of course, that led to a confab when I found the man was old Simon Tidings. He let me at once into all that had happened, and while we were talking De Bouvard himself came on deck. On discovering what was up, and that you lay out here, he was much

pleased, and bade me say that you must wait till morning as the river is not fit to be entered in the night, but that he would himself come off at daylight and pilot you in. There are some hidden rocks, it seems, a little within the entrance."

"I should have ventured it with the moonrise," said Pradey, "but now I will remain, and thanks to him."

This happy conclusion of the matter relieved Mr. Tym, Mac Ivrach, and me quite as much as it did the rest of the ship's company. The fact is our personal aims were not only thereby furthered, but we felt some little patriotic pride as well. Lastly, we could not forget that it was cowardly Spanish hands that had run poor Captain Sellinger to the yardarm!

We did not wait for light the next morning, but a little past three hastily dressed and came on deck. The wind had hauled round, blowing very gently now from the shore, and we caught the faint land scents, sweet after the long voyage, and were well pleased to part for a little with the salt, briny tang. Presently the east yellowed and the sea began to glitter, and as we turned landward a light fog or vapour split away and the embattled top of the mountain broke through.

The morning watch began to wash down the decks, as usual, but with many delays and long looks at the shore, and while they were still at work first one, and then another of the watch below appeared, Pradey and Phibbert soon came out, and by the time the sun had his rim fairly above the water three-fourths of the whole company were on deck.

The remaining vapours about the mountain and

river's mouth speedily broke up, and long before the sea had lighted to blue the entire stretch of shore was revealed.

It seemed to me nothing was ever more delightful to a sea-wearied eye. The tropical forest in all its mingled greens ran north and south from the mouth of the river, and on the southern river bank rose the dark, abrupt head of the wood-patched and bastioned mountain. The top of the peak was cleft, as I might say, like a bishop's mitre, and set in both points, as well as below, were the handsome jewels of two-score unmasked guns. To be more literal in the description, the castle stood on both heights of the crowning rocks, cannon being placed at all commanding points, and below was first a strong little fort and then a large bastion, each served with several pieces. The whole had been defended with palisades and an earthwork, but these were now nearly in ruins.

As for the river itself, that was no great affair—not very wide and not overdeep, moreover obstructed in places with rocks and ledges. The mountain came moderately down to it, and there was a small jetty where little boats could land, but the mountain on the other sides dropped down in an almost sheer pitch. Around on the western side seemed to be a little bight, or basin, for we could see several masts sticking up. The Tempest and a few barges were anchored farther out, and fully in sight.

We had barely come by a good idea of the place when there was a stir about the Tempest, and presently a boat dangled down from the davits, and three men entered it and began to come at a good

pace toward us. Some little time before she was nigh the man in the stern sheets was recognised by several about me as Captain De Bouvard. He proved to be a tall, lean, strong Frenchman, in age I should say fifty, and quite merry though intrepid in his expression. He shone in well-polished pot helmet and body-armour, and his jack-boots were freshly blacked and his weapons excellently ordered.

He and Pradey met like old friends, and for a time high broken English rose above all other sounds. After the cup had passed and things could come to a business footing, he renewed his offer to pilot us into the river, and this Pradey was, of course, ready to accept. Not to dwell needlessly on details, he brought us safely in, towing us with a barge, after one tack, and soon had us anchored in the little rearward cove.

While we were fetching by the castle men ran out to look at us, and, the news soon spreading, the ramparts were presently shining with armoured figures, who gave us a hearty cheer of welcome. We found other ships in the berth, lying just in the river edge of it, and their decks were also speedily manned and a volley of questions and congratulations poured out.

Pradey answered all briefly but good-naturedly, but meanwhile gave his chief attention to De Bouvard, from whom he was learning the chief facts of the siege and taking of the castle. It seemed that the place was defended by above three hundred Spaniards, not counting servants and slaves, and that a most stubborn fight was made. Captain Brodely began the attack with a force of four hun-

dred, but at noon on the third day, when the *corps du gard* was finally carried, his available command numbered only two hundred and thirty. The Spaniards were nearly all killed, the resolute old governor with the rest, and the unhurt remnant managed to descend on the steep landward side and escape. The wounded and the greater part of the women were left behind. This was all concluded about noon, two days since, and word had forthwith been sent to Morgan.

Such, in brief, was the account De Bouvard gave us of this daring but wicked piece of business; and though I could not but recoil at the baser parts, yet such was my anger against the Spaniards, and withal my pride in English valour, that I was elated and glad as well.

As soon as we were at our berth and all put in order Pradey called for the gig and was set ashore.

He was gone somewhat less than an hour, and when he returned rejoiced us all with the news that we could have shore leave. Secure as the ship was, it was deemed unnecessary to reserve a guard, so that Pradey himself, with the steward, were the only ones finally left behind.

It was a gladsome sensation when I finally stepped out upon the solid quay, and I think that Mr. Tym and Mac Ivrach were in accord with me. The morning was not yet far advanced, and it was but moderately warm, the air was pure and the sky nearly cloudless, and before us was the dark, strong mountain, almost fetching the eye to a little giddiness and yet pleasantly steadfast, while breaking away to the right was the refreshing green of the forest.

We made no talk for a bit, the others of the crew

pushing speedily on and leaving us, and it was only when the last of them were disappearing in the gateway of the lower forts that we finally started on.

Above this fort was communication by a steep path with a still more complete defence, good walls and bastions being here, and finally was the sharp, sudden rise of the great rock itself. At this point we could not but wonder at the desperate valour of Brodely's men, for from here to the summit the only regular ascent was by a flight of narrow, rock-hewn stairs, and the chance for placing scaling ladders was of the worst and riskiest. Yet up here they had won their way, and the fragments of some of the ladders, and more than that—a stain of blood here and there —still remained as witnesses to it!

At the top of the stairs was a large, square building that we afterward found was designed to hold military stores, and from here a straight walk led to a narrow, deep chasm, the castle itself lying on the other side. There had been a bridge here, but the Spaniards, in their final defence, had destroyed it, and in its place was now a rude affair of planks partly supported by guys. On the other side was a kind of barbican, and then the wall of the castle proper. The structure was of no great size, rising merely in a small tower or keep, and thence stretching out in two short, low wings. By this time the sun was pouring down fiercely, and, as we had explored the greater part of the place, we concluded to seek a more comfortable spot, and accordingly descended the hill again. The excursion had afforded us much pleasure, besides letting us into the knowledge of things that

it was profitable for us to know. More than all, perhaps, it gave us the assurance of the desperate and seemingly resistless valour of our present comrades.

CHAPTER XVIII.

OF THE COMING OF MORGAN AND THE DEPARTURE FOR PANAMA.

It was not long after we had returned to the bottom of the hill that we met five or six of the garrison, and with them a sturdy middle-aged man, who turned out to be the hero of the late battle, Captain Brodely. He was busy just then in giving some orders about the strengthening of the breastworks, and we merely got a short nod from him in exchange for our salute, though this proved to be but the beginning of our acquaintance. I can now compass the events of two weeks or more into a very brief space. My companions and I passed most of the time ashore, and though we did not seem to slight our shipmates, took care to have as little of their rough and unacceptable company as possible. After a while Captain Brodely sent for us, having heard something of our adventures, and we passed a really pleasant hour in his free-and-easy but rather interesting company. In particular, I was a little inclined to him because he made considerable of Mr. Tym, treating him with a good deal of respect, though all in his bluff, sailor fashion.

But these small things soon passed out of our thoughts, for one morning Captain Morgan's fleet

was sighted. In a moment there was the liveliest sort of stir and excitement. Flags were taken from the ships and hoisted on the castle and forts, and the guns were made ready to fire salutes. Every one furbished up his arms and harness, and the ships were cleaned and made trig. At first the wind was contrary, but finally one craft, and then another beat its way in, and before nightfall all had fetched the mouth of the river. Here a rather serious misfortune happened, for, what with our rejoicing and their own pleasure and tumult, the people of the first four of the ships steered upon the dangerous sunken rock, and their crafts were wrecked. The north wind coming on to blow completed the mishap, and it was only by considerable exertion that all the men and contents of the ships were landed, the vessels themselves being hopelessly wrecked. At last Captain Morgan himself stepped on shore, having till now stuck to his ship, and at once our men broke out in a great cheer, and, rushing down, caught him up and placed him on their shoulders and bore him up to the castle. I was near as they passed, and had an excellent chance to observe the looks of this renowned but fierce and unscrupulous man.

He seemed about the middle stature, or a little more, and in figure was strongly but not bulkily made. His features were rather comely, but his eyes were large and had a look of bold interrogation, and about his mouth were two deep creases, like a fowl's lucky bone, giving him a grim and altogether fearsome regard. He wore but little beard, his moustachios being spiked out with wax, which made him appear fiercer still, besides exposing his thick, firm-

set lips, and his dark hair was brushed back, exposing the width of his face, and fell behind upon his gorget. His dress was like that of the other chief buccaneers, only his armour was of a more fanciful pattern, and in his headpiece was a short plume. He was continually laughing and passing hails and salutations as he was borne on, but I could not make his countenance look the milder for that, but, on the contrary, it was almost the more terrifying, as being put out of its usual and natural expression.

My companions and I fell into the wake of the crowd and continued on to the castle, where at last the panting and shouting buccaneers set Morgan down. At the same time a final salute of all the cannon about the place was let off. Morgan removed his headpiece, giving a flourish of acknowledgment, and in a few words thanked the company for this cordial display and assurance of confidence. His voice was strong and smooth, and he spoke with readiness and correctness, by this giving me a good impression of his parts, though I had previously supposed him rather ill-schooled. When this was over he took Captain Brodely aside, and they talked for some time. At the end Morgan took the captain's arm and they went into the tower, the rest of us thereupon turning back and all scattering about whither we listed.

There was nothing more of note done that day, and I saw no more of Morgan, though I was once or twice again on the mountain. In the morning orders were given to build up the barricades, and all the crews were mustered and set to work. We found the chief's design was to make this a strong place, that

we might have a haven of refuge in case things went wrong at Panama. Mr. Tym and I fell to work with the rest, and with the men singing and laughing—for with the coming of Morgan all were very light-hearted—the palisades were presently re-erected and banked. It was now that I saw for the first time some of our prisoners—I mean the men—for they were presently brought out of the castle and made to work with us. I pitied the poor wretches, so hopeless and terror-stricken did they look; but I must say, to the credit of the buccaneers, that I saw no mentionable abuse, only a few being cursed or shouted at as they did something amiss.

By the end of the next day we had the place in a very fair posture for defence, whereupon Morgan had us knock off, only continuing the prisoners in some concluding things, and preparation was forthwith made for the great expedition. There were at this time in the river some small Spanish vessels, named, I think, chatten, and these, with the four little ships that had been there at first, Morgan fetched up close to the quays and armed with cannon. The object was to strengthen that approach to the castle. A fleet of canoes that likewise had been captured, together with the greater part of our boats, were then brought up to the main quay, and when five hundred men had been told off to garrison the castle and one hundred and fifty more left on the ships, we entered the boats and the gun was fired for starting. Captain Brodely was still left to keep San Lorenzo, as the castle was called, and looked a bit rueful as he saw the rest of us so gaily setting forth. Little did he know what was to happen to us, or

what a desperate thing the expedition was to be, or he had scarce worn so long a face.

Our command numbered just twelve hundred and three men, including Morgan himself, and for conveyance we had five barges, ten ships' boats, and thirty-two canoes. However, we knew that we were not to cover the whole distance by water, as there must be some leagues of a march from the head of navigation to the city. Every plan save one was carefully made, but that one proved of passing importance. It was the matter of provisions, which Captain Morgan thought we should take but a light supply of, as he conceived we must be able to find a sufficiency on the way. On a bright and not overwarm morning, then, with flags flying from the stern of the boats and two trumpeters blowing merry blasts, while those on shore waved their hats and cheered, the oars were set going and we started up the river.

My companions and I were still in Pradey's command, not having found a sufficient excuse for transference, though indeed it made little difference, for all the companies were as one large one, with Morgan at the head.

CHAPTER XIX.

OF THE THINGS WE ENDURED TILL WE CAME TO THE EVE OF BATTLE.

THAT day nothing of special note happened. We all greatly relished the embowering of the woods and greenery, after so long dwelling about the sea,

and for a time the men sang and laughed and splashed their hands in the water like so many joyous children. Anon we entered into deeper recesses, where the great vine-hung trees almost met overhead, and where the dark mosses trailed from the branches in long festoons and little pools glistened under the arches. Now and then a serpent, or some unknown creature, would whip off a slimy log and drop with an abrupt plump into the water. At other times we glided out into beautiful lakelike openings, where the water flowed over bright sandy shoals and the borders were brilliant with scarlet and purple passion flowers.

That day we made only six leagues, and then, as the men complained of the crippling of their legs consequent upon so long crouching in the boats, Morgan gave the order to land, the place being an attractive little savanna with a bend of the forest all about.

As soon as we had brought the arms ashore and established camp Morgan sent a force of fifty men to spy about and find, if possible, some stores of grain or cattle, for now our provisions were nearly exhausted. The men went out accordingly, but returned soon, saying they could find nothing. A few shepherds' huts were discovered, but these were absolutely empty, and seemed some little time abandoned. Here, for the first time, the men's enthusiasm received a check, and the song and laughter came to an end. They ate their few remaining provisions in silence, and, after smoking a while, wrapped themselves sullenly in their cloaks and lay down. My companions and I had wisely reserved some of our

supper, so we were better off than the others, but already began to find the situation rather depressing.

The next morning we boarded the boats and pushed on, and came that night to a place called Cruz de Juan Gallego. Here were more deserted huts, likewise stripped bare, and here also we found we must abandon the boats, for the water had of a sudden fallen very low. There were also great trees lying in the stream, some doubtless felled there of a purpose. I have omitted to state that Morgan had taken three of the prisoners along to serve as guides, and these now told us of a place about two leagues farther along, where the country would be good to continue by land. Morgan thereupon left one hundred and sixty men to defend the boats and to serve as a reserve force, and the rest of us formed up on shore.

The woods were now dense and the marching soon grew so bad that Morgan made us halt, and after a little talk with his captains decided to take again to the canoes, sending along a few hundred men at a time, and this, though with great labour, was done, and the reserve force then being brought up, we were once more all together. The fourth day a great part of us marched by land, being faint with hunger, but finding a few wild fruits, of which, at some risk (for we were not sure whether they were harmful or not), we partook. That day we were nearly exhausted, Mac Ivrach being compelled to abide altogether in one of the canoes, but at nightfall we found some huts containing several empty leathern bags, and these we desperately cut in pieces, and, having removed the hair, boiled, pounded, and

cut them in small bits, were only too glad to make our supper of them.

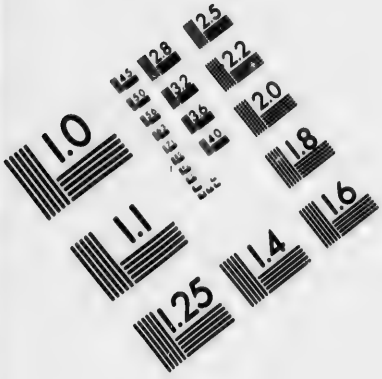
The fifth day, by great good fortune, we lighted on some provisions. It was at a little village called Barbacoa, and here, in a concealed grot, we found two sacks of meal, a few measures of wheat, certain fruits called platanoes and two great jars of wine. These were absolute salvation to us, who must otherwise have soon perished. The next day we came upon two or three ambuscades, but none manned, and toward night our scouts discovered a small party of Indians. These our fellows tried to take, but were not nimble enough, and three of our party were wounded in the attempt. Luckily we presently found a storehouse in which was some maize, and this refreshed us for that time. All this while Captain Morgan showed great patience with the prisoner-guides, notwithstanding that all had not fallen out as they said, but I think he perceived that even indifferent guides were better than none at all, and so had some wise mercy. Our men were now sullen or murmuring, for the greater part, though some showed fortitude. Mr. Tym, in particular, allowed no word of discontent to escape him, though more than once he was in great straits to keep on his legs. Nor would he avail himself, except as his turn came, with the boats, though, considering his age, the rest of the company would not have complained had he done so. This fortitude gained him considerable praise, and several of the men spoke kindly on his account to me, though I confess I did not continue as he did, wholly without murmuring.

On the morning of the seventh day our guides

comforted us, declaring that we must shortly fall upon better luck, as we were near a village called Cruz, where it was scarce probable that every vestige of food was destroyed. We pushed on cheered by this discourse, and at noon came upon the village, but to our sorrow it had been set on fire, and there was little left but ashes. However, by diligent search we found a secret place where were some jars of wine and a sack of bread, and these we pounced upon greedily, there being but the merest morsel apiece. It was not many minutes before several of the men fell sick, the reason being the weak and disordered state of their stomachs, but at first we thought the wine was poisoned. On inquiry we found we were now twenty-six Spanish leagues from Chagre and about eight from Panama, so at least the greater part of the journey was done. That day we discharged, cleaned, and reloaded our firearms, being persuaded that we must ere long come upon some fighting.

At this place the river had fallen so low that even the smallest canoe had to be given up, and most were sent back a little distance and secreted. A few were hidden near by.

The eighth morning we still staggered along, weak but in a sullen way determined, and now, indeed, we had some fighting, for we came upon an Indian ambuscade. Even our guides were deceived, and we were in the midst of the danger before we perceived it. We had entered a great wood, where the dense tops of the trees made it almost dark, and were plodding along about ten or twelve abreast—as many as the path admitted of—when suddenly some



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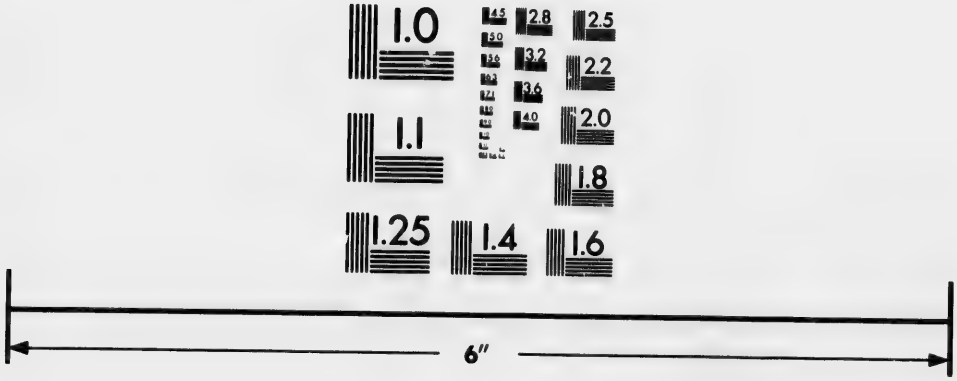

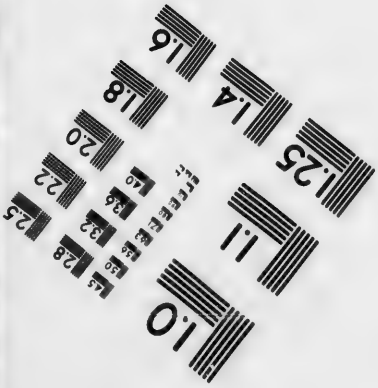

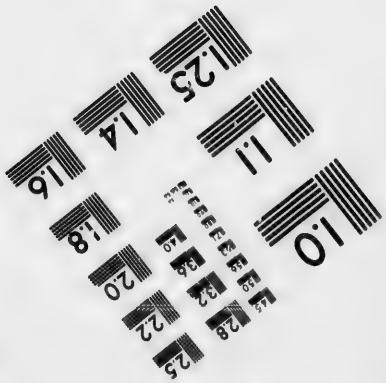

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undergrowth crackled and in an instant a great whistling storm of arrows broke upon us. Several men were wounded, and those in advance instantly charged the bush. It was at first in vain, for the concealed archers fired another volley and swiftly made off. Then presently a great screech went up, and from a little mountain, which here rose a bit one side, ran down as many as five hundred half-naked savages.

New strength seemed to come to us, for here was a tangible foe at last, and we made a savage charge, the sharp swords and loaded pistols of those in advance speedily breaking the ranks of the poorly-armed natives. They were brave, nevertheless, and did not retire even then, but a pistol ball presently brought down their chief, and then at last they fled.

I took part in none of this fighting, as my place was in the middle of the command, while only the first ranks were engaged.

We lost eight men killed and ten wounded, which showed how fiercely the savages fought.

That night there was a heavy rain, and we had some ado to keep our arms dry, but the next morning the sun came out and we once more plodded on.

But now the terrible strain was nearly over. On the ninth day our guides showed us a little mountain, which having ascended, behold there lay the South Sea! We were even able to make out some ships which must have sailed freshly from Panama. Going down from this mountain into a vale, what was our joy to find a considerable herd of cattle! These were attacked as though we had been a pack of wolves, and after slaying all we could we cut off the flesh in great flakes, and, having pitched it

into hastily-made fires, drew it out half roasted and greedily devoured it. It was a sight to startle one to see the half-starved wretches at their repast. They gnawed and grunted, and between times broke out in laughter, the blood running down their hands and staining their garments to the waist. As to myself and my companions, particularly Mr. Tym, it is but fair to say we behaved somewhat less like beasts, though, in truth, the taste of that charred, warm flesh was to us of a sweetness and deliciousness beyond words of mine to describe!

Greatly refreshed and now in heart again, we pushed on, and, having ascended a considerable hill, beheld at last the steeples of Panama. At that the men broke into joyous shouts, as though the city were already ours, and the drummers began to beat and the trumpeters to blast. We had scarce made this din when there was a noise of hoofs, and a little company of Spaniards appeared on the opposite hill. The distance was short, and we distinctly heard their threats as they broke out savagely at us.

"*Perros! nos veremos!*" they cried—"Ye dogs," that is, "we shall soon meet ye!"

With this they shook their fists at us and galloped off.

"We will go into camp now," said Morgan coolly. "To-morrow we shall have to test these gentlemen's menaces."

The men set up a cheer, the second I had heard since the beginning of the terrible march, and immediately broke ranks.

We roasted more meat and had supper, and then Mr. Tym touched me on the arm and asked in a

whisper whether I would not like to take a little scout with him.

"I am minded to steal as far as yonder hill," he said, "whence we must plainly see the city. Our videttes are quite a little beyond, and I think will not perceive us."

I was ready for just such an adventure, and, watching our chance, we stole out of the camp. Morgan had given stringent orders against straggling, but on this occasion we thought the law might well be relaxed a little. At least we were ready to take the risk.

We slipped along in the concealment of some low trees, and in a short time ascended the opposite hill. Here, though not in the precise spot, we had seen the horsemen.

Truly enough, as we reached the elevation and rose to our feet, the city, together with the bay, the islands, and all to the horizon beyond broke upon our sight.

We stood in silence a moment, regarding the beautiful picture.

As we did so a bell began to ring and a gun was fired, and presently the city seemed to awake to a sharp stir. In a short time in what we thought must be the chief square, or plaza a bright fire blazed up.

"They are at least busy," said Mr. Tym coolly. "I opine we shall have our hands full, if we win to-morrow."

We began to retrace our steps, and in the end got unobservedly back into camp.

CHAPTER XX.

OF THE OPENING OF THE BATTLE.

I SLEPT but ill, and that not only because my mind was excited but because in the night the Spaniards fetched some cannon out of the city and began firing upon us. Fortunately, they advanced their battery but a little way and none of the shot hurt us, but only kept up a considerable noise and cut down branches from the trees about us. Mr. Tym seemed much less disquieted than I was, though once or twice he sat up and watched the commotion of the shot among the trees. Nothing was said and he soon lay down again, but it was some time before his breathing indicated that he was asleep. We had put out our camp fires, that being Morgan's orders, and the only light about the bivouac was that of the moon and stars, but these gave a very pretty radiance, in especial lighting the rows of reclining figures and fetching out a weapon here and there with a silvery flash.

I fell asleep at last, though I had not believed so till I found myself coming out of a troubled dream and my comrades beginning to stir about. It was the gray of dawn, and everything looked dim and cheerless, the men not talking much and no fires yet alight.

I was quickly up and Mr. Tym and Mac Ivrach, who were already awake, followed. Nothing more was heard of the cannon firing, and I suspected that the enemy had discovered how ineffectual their

efforts were and had retreated again into the city. This, indeed, I soon found was the case. Morgan presently appeared, the sentries were relieved and a hasty breakfast eaten. It was now quite a bit lighter and objects around began to take on their natural look. My courage, a little dampened before, began to rise, and I think many of the men felt likewise, for the talk speedily grew louder, and there was more stirring about and some laughter. Arms were now examined, and none too soon, for the word speedily came to form. By this time a fair gleam of the sun had succeeded the eastern reddening, and we began to catch the faint noises from the awakening city.

"There are many there who did not sleep well, either," I said to myself, "and with good reason. Alas, poor people, this will be a dreadful day for you!" I was already catching the confident spirit of my companions, though as yet partaking of none of their dreadful desires and bloodthirstiness.

We were speedily in order, and every captain went to the head of his company. Morgan looked in a satisfied way along the lines and drew his sword. At that moment he seemed to have lost a little colour, but his bearing was bold and steady. He pointed toward the hill, and, with the loud word "Forward!" led us into the road.

It seemed but a moment before we were over the rise and marching down into the little plain. There, to the no small stirring of my pulse, were drawn up the Spanish forces.

I thought there must be three thousand of them. The greater part were foot, but on each flank was a

considerable body of horse. Their arms and appointments seemed of the best description, their cuirasses and helmets, in particular, gleaming like pools of water with every movement. I saw the great flag of Spain near the middle of the main body, and there were numerous small ensigns and family standards. The whole force was drawn up close to a little fort or castle, the city itself being here unwalled, and only a short space on their right was an earthwork mounted with five or six cannon.

At least, I thought, we have our work cut out. I greatly doubt if we can overcome such a strong force.

This I found was the opinion of many others, for a kind of growl of apprehension ran around.

"Halt!" cried Morgan sharply. The men were only too glad to obey. "Listen, comrades," he went on. "You fear yonder gang, but without reason. They are not what they look. I will be sworn not a score of them could carry half a glass of wine to their lips without spilling it. They tremble. They know us. Stand firm, then!"

This talk put the men in some heart, but still they seemed in no hurry to advance. Morgan spoke to one of the captains and the man stepped to the front, and ran his eye along the line. He then rapidly selected from the different companies fifty men, and these he ordered to stand forward. I immediately perceived that every one chosen was an expert shot.

"You will make forward and begin the battle," said Morgan coolly to this little group. "Put three paces between every man and fire with care. The

rest of you look about and you will perceive that the ground is soft, so that yonder horse can not charge to advantage."

It was as he said. The ground on both sides of the broad road was a meadow, and in places were quags and miry spots. It was clear that we had but to stand firm to repel the horse.

Morgan gave us no more time for reflection. The captain with his sharpshooters set forward, and the rest of us were brought into a new formation so as best to repel an attack. To compass this we were made to form a long square with double lines, all facing outward, and a few little cannon were placed in front and rear. This done, we had an opportunity to watch the progress of our advance company.

They spread out, as Morgan had commanded, the wings thus brought well abroad into the meadow, and so trudged sturdily along.

Some paces on they went, the enemy making no movement to stay them, and then of a sudden one of the bands of horse trotted into the road, and at the blast of a trumpet broke forward at a swift gallop.

I almost held my breath, as did I am sure my companions. Down thundered the horse. They deployed right and left, and were almost upon our men. Then the cool buccaneers lifted their guns, and following the roar I saw the foremost of the riders flash out of their saddles. There was a pulling up and rearing and plunging of frightened animals, and almost before I could realize it the entire remainder of the troop had reined about and were thundering back whence they came.

We broke into a frantic cheer, and by a common impulse the entire square surged forward.

"Lead on, Morgan!" thundered Paul Cradde; "we can wipe those fellows off the earth!"

"Not yet!" shouted Morgan, his face now red and fiery, and his voice set almost to the pitch of a laugh. "We must repel another charge or two first."

And so it proved. There was a little confusion in the Spanish ranks, as the flying riders rode back and wheeled to regain their old station, and then another trumpet sounded and the entire body of foot moved forward.

"Stand fast!" said Morgan in deep tones.

The enemy came on slowly, and of a sudden stopped. The line of guns glittered, and instantly everything was confused in flame and smoke. As it cleared away I saw half a score of our advance fellows down, and the others running at full speed toward us. No one in the main body, as far as I could see, was hurt.

On the Spaniards came, their flanks expanding and their horse circling out into the meadow. In a flash the whole army seemed to be inclosing us.

It would be much to my mind if I could describe with clearness and precision what followed. Unfortunately it is beyond my power. It was all a whirl and a maze of figures and the puffing in and breaking of clouds of smoke, and beyond that little but some clattering of swords and guns and much jostling about. I was not in the front rank, and could only step this way and that, as my companions advanced or retreated, and beyond once discharging

my gun did no actual fighting. It was soon over, and I saw that the enemy had broken.

"After them, and take some prisoners!" Morgan roared.

I was immediately left in a little clear space, with only Mr. Tym and Mac Ivrach near at hand. The others had made a dash after the flying Spaniards.

My two companions, like myself, were unhurt. In this respect they were more fortunate than twenty or so of our mates. Nine or ten of these were killed outright, and the others were doubled up with pain or sitting about bloody and bewildered.

The smoke gradually thinned out, and I looked toward the city. I saw the Spaniards slowly but doggedly retreating, stopping at intervals to wheel and fire a desultory volley. Our advance men were at their heels, but did not pursue far, for, having taken five or six prisoners, they let go a parting shot or two and returned.

Morgan put on a stern look and fell to questioning the captives thus brought in. He had but indifferent command of Spanish, but, with the assistance of one of the captains, finally managed to learn what he desired. The first man was a coward, and was only too glad to tell all he knew. It appeared that the Spanish force consisted of four troops of horse and twenty-four of foot, besides a few hundred Indians and negroes. The whole numbered about three thousand. There were several strong forts or castles guarding all the outer parts of the city, but the greater number and the strongest were on this side. Morgan then closely questioned the man as to whether

any decoy or ambush had been prepared, or any desperate trick conceived. The man answered no; but that the governor was for making a stubborn resistance, never surrendering the city. Furthermore, we might expect a more resolute attack than either of the former, and that a new danger in it would be the driving down upon us of a great number of fierce, half-wild cattle. These were now inclosed in a court in the rear of the neighbouring castle and would be sent out in advance of the charge.

Morgan then questioned another prisoner, and though he got no such free answers as from the first, yet he was satisfied that what he had already heard was true. This he believed the readier that the second soldier cast great looks of contempt upon the first, and this he had scarce done had the fellow been deceiving us.

Morgan now harrangued us briefly, saying that victory was assuredly within our reach, and that we had but to put forth one more effort to secure it. This speech being well received, he left a guard of two hundred with the wounded, and also to act as a reserve, and led the rest to the attack. Mr. Tym, MacIvrach, and myself were included in this assaulting party.

We marched directly toward the enemy, and at once received their fire, losing ten or twelve in killed and severely wounded. Then, of a sudden, Morgan sprang to the right, and we, wheeling after him, he led us almost at a run from the road into the meadow. I immediately perceived what he would do, which was to avoid the forts and this strong front of the town, and attack a weaker place. To effect this

he had feigned to make an assault, thereby holding the main force of the enemy where it was.

It was soft footing, and we ran rather heavily, but still we were making some progress when the foe trained their cannon on us, and though we were in loose formation they brought down well-nigh a score. Their musketeers also made forward and fired, and before we had proceeded twenty yards farther it seemed that not fewer than a hundred buccaneers were either slain or wounded.

This could not last. The enemy was having it all his own way, and unless we could turn upon him soon he would lay us all dead or drive us off the field. A man in front of me swung out and fell sidewise on the grass. A ball struck the stock of Mac Ivrach's musket, and as I turned my head to make sure that Mr. Tym was safe I felt a sharp, spiteful rap on my own headpiece.

Paul Cradde was a little way on my right, and he had begun to swear when a shout went up from those in front and with great suddenness the whole command came to a halt. I saw three or four of the captains running out into the field, and in a moment their several commands were following them, and now we were wheeled short and faced toward the city.

A sort of growl of relief and satisfaction went round, for at last this playing at living targets was over. We looked to our priming and brought forward our bandoliers.

"None too soon," said Mr. Tym to me, "for here come the bulls."

I turned my head, and there, indeed, were these

new and strange foes. A great herd of them was crowding from a space to the right of the road down the slight slope to the meadow, and behind followed a band of yelling Indians. These in a moment had turned the herd and headed it our way.

Morgan seemed to be ready for this new trick. One of his lieutenants ran down to us, and Pradey was ordered to wheel our company and hold the beasts in check.

Phibbert then pushed in among us and ordered the half-score fellows who carried pikes to come out on the flank. After our fire they were to cover us, and, if need be, make a counter-charge. I confess that I awaited this novel enemy with some quickening of the pulse, and not the less so as by the change of formation I was brought into the front rank.

The herd thundered down. The front must have numbered two hundred, and their white tossing horns, furious bellowing, and the pounding of their hoofs made their advance seem truly formidable. Pradey suffered them to come within easy range and then gave the word. We fired, and before the smoke had fairly lifted the pikemen sprang in before us. Through the breaking cloud we presently saw the glancing horns of a score or two of the leaders, but behind them not a hundred of the herd. The others, except ten or twelve that were down, had halted or turned back. Then our pikemen made a dash, the charging bulls pulled up short, tossed their heads, whirled, and in less than a minute from the time we had formed to receive the attack the last of them were in full retreat.

We set up a shout, and proceeded to recharge

our pieces. At once I saw Morgan walk a bit down the lines and turn back, whereupon the trumpets blew, and I perceived that the assault had been ordered.

"Keep close!" cried Mr. Tym in my ear. "This will be the most desperate business of all."

"White arms and pieces of eight!" roared Paul Cradde.

"Aye, aye!" shouted a man near me.

The trumpets sounded a quicker note, and we broke into a run.

I could glance between the heads in front of me and see what sort of place we were approaching. Five or six little huts stood out in front, some paddocks or cattle yards ran along in the rear, and still back of these was a long, low stone building. The flat roof of this was mounted with cannon, and behind the rails of the paddocks were the crouching figures of soldiers. A troop of horse was drawn up at the right of the long building.

We lowered our heads and made straight forward. Then the enemy's discharge broke, and men went crashing down on all sides of me. Before the smoke had lifted we returned the fire and were immediately among the little huts. I threw down my gun and drew my sword, and fetched a glance around for Mr. Tym. He was not to be seen. Mac Ivrach was a few paces away, and through the smoke were some other familiar figures. I hesitated, being filled with lively anxiety concerning the supercargo, and while I delayed the last of my companions passed on. I glanced hastily about, not really caring to be abandoned, and at that moment felt a sudden and

strange shock. I perceived that I had been hit, and staggered toward a hut and leaned against it. After a little interval, it seemed to me that I made out the shape of a human figure breaking through the smoke. I could see but dimly, but I thought the man was Pradey.

CHAPTER XXI.

OF THE CONCLUSION OF MY ADVENTURE AND THE FALL OF THE CITY. LIKEWISE OF THE STRANGE THING THAT HAPPENED THEREAFTER.

I MADE a kind of dreamlike effort to come back to myself, and for an instant half succeeded. The advancing figure came out plainer. I saw the face, and it was indeed Pradey's. I struggled to keep it steadily in view, but it insisted on swimming in with the puffs of smoke, and as my giddiness increased it lost all shape and outline. I must have slipped from my position against the hut at this point, for things gave a kind of upward flash, in particular, one object danced out like a bright piece of steel, and then I was conscious of a hard jolt and all was blackened out.

The next that I am able to recall is a great swaying and swinging sensation, followed by an abrupt pause and then a little cold shock. I opened my eyes and found a wet cloth on my forehead, the ends hanging down on my cheeks. I put up my hand and drew the cloth away. As I cleared my eyes a figure close by stepped forward and I per-

ceived with joy that it was Mr. Tym. He was in his fighting gear, wanting only the headpiece, and seemed to be quite unhurt. He smiled as I stared up at him.

"You are safe, then?" I said.

"To be sure, and you also. It was but a little furrow turned along the skull, but might easily have been serious. Nay, but you had best remain where you are," he pursued as I would have risen. "There is some heat in your wound, and in this weather it were easy to provoke fever."

I perceived the wisdom of this advice, and settled back in my place. I glanced about, however, and saw that I was in a shelter made of the rails of one of the neighbouring paddocks covered with palm thatch. By the brightness of the sun that came in at the door and the oppressive heat I guessed that it must be nigh noon.

My thoughts seemed now to fall into their natural order, and I made haste to question him.

"How does it happen that I am here?" I said; "and in what manner was I delivered from Pradey?"

"I killed the villain," he answered quietly. "It were best that you did not talk overmuch now," he went on, "but to satisfy you I will say that I missed you and turned back, and found you wounded, and with Pradey making in upon you. I had scant time, but fired, and was fortunate enough to send a ball through his head. Then I dragged you a bit aside, and presently was able to secure the aid of one of the men, when we brought you hither."

This was great news, to be sure—in especial, the

part that related to Pradey—and I was content to remain silent a moment and reflect upon it.

"Then that villain is gone! Surely we have reason to rejoice," I said at last. "But how think you will the other buccaneers take it? Do they know the manner of his death?"

"Nay, and it were best that they should not," answered Mr. Tym, lowering his voice. "Let it seem that he died in action."

"True," said I, "that will be wise. But now what of the fortunes of the day? It would seem that we had won, but in what sort? Have we taken the city?"

"Well, if you will talk," said he, shaking his head, "I trow you may as well have the whole story. Aye, we have beaten the enemy and taken the city. Nevertheless, Morgan has, for a little, withdrawn, fearing, as it is said, mines, poisoned water, and other snares, but I think in reality not desiring to trust the men. He will be for waiting till their blood is a bit cooled and he can be sure of obedience."

"Well," said I a little wearily, and withal my head fetching a pang, "tell me one other thing and I am content. How has it gone with Mac Ivrach?"

"Not so much as scratched," he answered. "He was here but a little time ago."

I was glad to give over, with this, and lay for a while quietly. Mr. Tym sat down in the door of the hut and began to care for his arms, and I was on the verge of falling asleep. Of a sudden there was a far-off noise of shouting, followed by a long-drawn, agonized scream.

"What," I cried, starting up, "has the fiends' work begun already?"

"It would seem so," he said with a sigh. "I conceive they are putting some poor creature to the torture. Doubtless Morgan will have an early word concerning treasure, and also seeks to learn of traps and snares."

"Would that God might blast him and all his foul crew!" I cried in fiery indignation.

Mr. Tym composed his lips, as though to assent, but did not answer.

"I smell smoke," I said after a little. "Will they be burning the town?"

He stepped to the door of the hut and looked out.

"Nay, I think not, yet a building here and there is burning. Aye, one of the cathedrals is ablaze. I will try to learn what it means."

Here I heard some people hurrying past, and Mr. Tym, going a little farther out, hailed them.

I could not distinguish what they said, but in a moment he returned.

"There are no orders for burning, so it is claimed, yet four of five considerable buildings, including one cathedral, are in flames. Morgan has ordered the people of the town to fight the fire, and some of the buccaneers have been detailed to lend aid."

"The smoke smells wondrous strong," I observed.

"I think that comes from the burning of a few outlying huts," he answered. "They are but a short space from here. Nay, they are nigh where I found you."

"I might have been roasted, as well, had you not searched me out," I said, with a long breath. "Yet tell me—how near adjacent to the city are we?"

"It is the space where the paddocks stood," he answered. "The men have pulled the rails down and converted them, as you see, into frames for huts. Phibbert and the man I told you of helped me build this one."

"Phibbert is no bad fellow," I said gratefully. "And as for you—truly, how am I indebted to you!"

"Speak not of it," he said lightly. "I am indebted to you also."

We were silent a moment, and in the interval I could hear the confused noises and cries from the town, though, to my vast relief, no more shrieks.

"Do we quarter in the place to-night?" I finally asked.

"Morgan says no," he answered. "He will wait till the morrow. Alas! and I dread that time!"

"And how long will their hell's work last?" I said despondently.

"I have heard guesses of two weeks and more," he returned gravely. "There is much wealth," he went on, "not a little doubtless hidden, and that will be brought to light by torture. You must fancy your ears stopped, Ardick, and fetter your tongue, and so pass the time by, which would to God were well over!"

He heaved a sigh and began to pace up and down, which showed how deeply he was moved, though his judgment told him it was to no purpose.

I sighed in response and fell silent, my spirits not a little depressed.

Presently my companion made an effort to show a more cheerful port, and began to talk about our prospects of escape and the like, but though I tried to brighten to meet him I could not manage it, and in the end we were fain to let the whole discourse fall. He then said he would go out and pick up the news, which he did, being gone near half an hour.

It seemed that Morgan continued to his resolution to withdraw his forces from the city till the next day, this excepting only two or three companies that should search for any concealed fighting men, and should also seize and man the few ships in the harbour. The rest of his command he meant to place about the landward part of the city, guarding it that none should escape.

All this, I may say in a word, was done. Little resistance was offered to our searching party, and indeed it was soon found that the Governor and those of his captains who were unhurt as well as many of the soldiers had incontinently fled. So my vengeance and that of my companions on the haughty Don Perez de Guzman must at least be put off.

Shortly after Mr. Tym was back with this news Mac Ivrach appeared, and I roused a little from my depressed state, and returned the honest fellow's hearty greeting. Mr. Tym had already acquainted him, it seemed, with the story of my rescue, and of Pradey's death, and we held some discourse on this, Mac Ivrach conceiving, as I did, that it was the greatest piece of good fortune that could have be-

fallen us. This talk over, we bethought ourselves of dinner, and he went away to fetch some, which he presently did, and with this the unpleasant chapter of Pradey seemed to be closed. I was hungrier than I thought, and such was the effect of the warm food upon my empty stomach that I presently rallied from my depressed state, and in a short time had regained much of my former courage and steadiness.

I remained in the hut during the day. Indeed the heat was terrible, and it would have been a bid for a fever for me to have ventured out. Now and then I went to the hut door, and thence could see the men extend their lines so as to engirdle the city, but such was the fervour of the sun that the movement was performed slowly, and with a general mien of listlessness. At last it was completed, and then a little company was to be seen at short intervals, with guards walking between, and at one point Morgan's headquarters, with a body of two or three score in attendance. Mac Ivrach had been summoned to take his place with the other guards, leaving Mr. Tym and me together. Why this latter arrangement was made we did not then learn.

About nightfall Mac Ivrach returned, having been relieved, and then we were told that Phibbert had been chosen captain in place of Pradey, and that it was to his good nature that we owed Mr. Tym's exemption from guard duty.

Night finally drew on and the watch-fires of the guards were lighted. The moon had not yet risen, and the mounting flames, driven presently by a wind from the sea, flared up with a landward slant, and

partially obscured with clouds of smoke the white walls of the outlying houses. In the direction of the harbour there was a pale radiance, showing where the ships, and doubtless the quays, had been set off with prudent lights. The city itself was nearly quiet. Now and then a dog barked or a horse could be heard galloping along a hard street, and once a bell rang and we heard the faint, sweet sounds of a chant, as it might be the priests were tunefully asking mercy of God, but there were few other sounds through the night than these.

At daybreak the trumpets were blown, and the companies assembled under their respective leaders. Breakfast was hastily eaten, no delays being made for cookery, but all taken cold, and shortly the word was given to march. A little before this we had learned that Morgan's plan was to proceed first to the Governor's castle, making a stern show of warlike force on the way, and there Morgan himself would remain, keeping with him fifty men, and the rest were to scatter and plunder and ravage at will. Certain rules, however, were to be observed, one being that all must deposit their spoil in the hall of the castle, where it should remain till the final decision, another was that prisoners—that is, slaves—were to remain the property of those who seized them. If, nevertheless, it was added, any desired to bring their slaves to the castle, having a mind to sell them there, they could do so, and such slaves should be guarded and cared for till their disposal.

The sun was creeping up and the breeze had fallen when at last we caught step and set forward down the chief street of the city. The drums were

beating spiritedly and the trumpets sounded thrilling blasts, and with our soldierly array, the headpieces, cuirasses and musket barrels flashing in the sun, I thought we presented a fine and altogether awing spectacle.

The place was deathly quiet. Every house was closed, and as far as we could see down the street not a person was in sight. Still we travelled along, and at last, just as I was wondering at the extent of this part of the city, the street ended, and we broke out into a considerable square, or plaza. Here the buildings were large and of a more pretentious sort than any we had yet seen. All were of stone, some of a brown or reddish colour, and some of common stone well set in red cement, but few were above three stories in height. The roofs of all were flat, and most had low parapets, on which stood pots of bright flowers or handsome shrubs, and the walls of some were nearly covered with climbing greenery. Like the street we had left, the plaza was completely deserted, the shutters of every building around being up.

"Hoots!" said Mac Ivrach in a low tone, "but they hae secreted ilka dog and cat as well as theirsels. I wad be wishing for a bit stir o' some sort. Sic stillness no seems canny."

This I conceive pretty well expressed the feelings of us all, who felt a kind of oppression in the continued silence.

Morgan had halted a moment, but presently had us forward again, and without any interruption or change in the appearance of things we continued on till we reached the castle. This was a considerable

stone structure, standing on the top of a little plateau, and was defended by high walls and one strong tower. The walls were pierced at intervals for cannon, and on the side toward the water, which here was close at hand, was a kind of rectangular outer work provided with four or five large guns. The ports in the walls of the main structure were all closed, as was the strong gate, and not a soul was in sight. The flag of Spain floated from a staff on the tower.

It looked as though this were an excellent place for a mine or other device, but I was speedily told that this fear was unfounded, for the place had been entered and the chief rooms explored, but nothing in the nature of a trap had been found. The keys had been given to Morgan, and the guns spiked.

We were but a moment in entering, and while one of the captains, at Morgan's command, went up to haul down the Spanish flag and put our own in its place, the different companies were formed up in their order, and the last words of advice and command given. Among other things, all were bidden to be sparing of the wine till it was proven that it was not poisoned, to return to the castle at nightfall, and to hasten thither at once if two successive cannon shots were fired. These were to mean some sudden or imminent danger.

All this being attended to, the companies, save the picked detail to remain with Morgan, broke ranks and shortly quitted the castle.

"Whither now?" I said to Mr. Tym, as he, Mac Ivrach and I found ourselves in the street.

"What say you to descending to the beach and

thence proceeding to the quays, where we can obtain a boat to one of the ships?"

"There to be removed from the horrors we must see here?" I answered. "I am favourable to it."

"And I," said Mac Ivrach.

But the words were scarce out of his mouth when a man came running out of the opening of the neighbour street and on seeing us pulled up short.

"Saunts and angels defend us!" cried Mac Ivrach, fairly staggering back. "The gaist o' the captain!"

For, indeed, the man appeared to be no other than Captain Sellinger.

CHAPTER XXII.

OF THE CONCLUSION OF OUR GREAT SURPRISE, AND WHAT FOLLOWED AT THE HEELS OF IT.

Even Mr. Tym changed colour, and for my part my legs grew weak and my heart thumped like a fulling hammer.

"Why, friends, don't ye know me? Do ye take me for a ghost?"

It was the same old hearty, sea-rough voice that we knew so well. It was no spirit, but the man's mortal self!

Mr. Tym was the first to pull himself together. He rushed forward, and with a little cry of gladness seized Sellinger by both hands and danced the strong skipper about. I was next, and could scarce keep back the tears as I gripped the big brown hands.

Even Mac Ivrach grinned like a merry-andrew and cut one step of a caper as he took his turn.

"But, man," cried Mr. Tym, as we at last released the skipper and stood delightedly about him, "how can this be? Did we not see you hanged? Aye, dangling your length from the yardarm of the Pilanca? Why, we made out the very white shirt you have on—surely the only one among the crew!"

The captain first gave a stare of astonishment and incredulity, and then broke into a low whistle.

"Aye, aye, I see how it was. It was the boatswain, Pedillo. Marry, I never thought of your taking him for me! You see the old Governor conceived the notion that the fellow was more responsible than anybody else for our little break, and so danced him up to the yard. I believe one of the priests gave him a shirt, or frock, to be turned off in, and so that was where you got your white tog. Aye, aye, I understand the thing now."

And so, of course, did we, and it was simple enough, to be sure.

He asked a question or two in turn, which we answered, and then I went on to inquire how the Spaniards used him after our escape.

"Why, not so bad," he answered. "My wound was attended to, and then I was clapped in the brig. When the ship reached Chagre I was set upon the midships of a mule and brought here. Since then I have lived in the house of—Faith! but that reminds me. I have run at my best speed hither, not alone to sail in your company, but because of another matter of urgency. Will you come along with me and make no stay for questions?"

"Surely!" cried Mr. Tym without hesitation.

And Mac Ivrach and I said the same.

"Then this way."

He turned, and set off up the same street he had emerged from. I had, of course, noticed his dress and other appearance, ere this, and found that he looked and was habited as formerly. He was armed now, however, being girded with a belt, to which was hung a short hook-pistol and a Spanish hanger.

Our gait was almost a run, and as the captain seemed to have no breath to spare, we did not break in with talk, but kept on silently in his wake. Anon the street widened, and here we fetched alongside, still, however, observing silence. Presently the captain turned into a little plaza beautifully shaded with palm trees. Speeding across this, we fetched up at a high stone wall, which I perceived must set off a considerable estate. A little way along this wall was a strong iron gate, the top defended by sharp spikes. The captain plucked a key out of his pocket, with which he unlocked this gate, and, urging us all in before him, hastily locked it again. I now perceived that we were in an extensive garden, fruit and shade trees standing thickly about and the walks bordered with flowers. A little way in the rear I could partly make out a handsome, low stone house. The captain hurried us up the main walk, making no concealment now of speed, and at a fair run we brought up before the door of the house. I perceived then that the place was strong as well as handsome, the building being of some yellowish stone set off with a cage fashion of balconies in the Spanish style. The chief

entrance was directly before us, a step leading up to it, and I noted that the door was a very strong affair and in height and bigness was sufficient for a little church. The captain knocked sharply twice, when the door was slowly opened and an old negro put out his head.

"All's well, Tonto. These are the friends I went to seek."

The old fellow looked at us a little suspiciously, I thought, but without objection stood aside.

"Any alarms, Tonto?"

"None, Señor Gile," said the old man in broken English.

The hall within was all but dark, for the door at the rear end was closed, and the only light descended from the hall above.

"These quarters," said the captain, turning to us, "belong to Don Enrique de Cavodilla. You recall him, I think."

We readily did so, for he was one of the grandees of the Pilanca.

"Well," went on the captain, "he is—or has been—my master, and, having used me very well, I am somewhat beholden to him. Yet even more I would do a good turn to his wife, Doña Isabella, and to his niece, the Señorita Carmen. You see now the reason of my hurry."

"Surely," said Mr. Tym, "and we will gladly help you." Mac Ivrach and I also heartily assented.

"I am free to say I know not how the thing is to be managed," said the captain, sinking his tones a little, "but that we will immediately consider. We must first consult the don."

As he spoke a door shut and a man came out at the head of the stairs. Even in the dim light I recognised him at once as the old Spaniard.

He was a tall, spare, erect man, with plenty of gray in his beard and hair, but in bearing still in his strength and prime. He was dressed in the sad-coloured velvet of the ship, with the ruffles and other finery.

"Go on, Ardick, and tell him how matters stand," said Sellinger; "I am still without a hold on the rascally Spanish."

"Sir," I said accordingly, stepping to the foot of the stairs, "Captain Sellinger is here and has brought with him the friends he went out to seek."

"God be praised!" cried the old hidalgo with the deepest heartiness. "Sancta Maria, señor! I never heard sweeter words. Ascend, ascend, you and your friends!"

I briefly translated the don's speech, and with the captain in the lead we mounted the stairs.

The old man met us at the top and somewhat to my discomposure kissed each of us in turn.

"You will save us!" he cried. "You will deliver my wife and the poor child! My life is of little worth, but they—— Ah, come with me, señores, and assure these poor creatures that you will succour them!"

"Lead on, señor," I said, not a little touched. "Be assured we will do what we can."

He lost no more time, but led us hastily to a rear chamber, where he threw open the door. Two ladies were within, who quickly rose.

The shutters of the windows were open, for the room looked only on an inclosed court, and the bright sunlight, checked merely by the draperies, brought out everything clearly.

I immediately recognised Doña Isabella. She was small and slight, with a proud, handsome face, but a faded skin, and was dressed richly with many bright ribbons and ornaments. Doña Carmen was, as I instantly perceived, passing beautiful. Something tall, and yet of such proportions that she scarce seemed so, she all but startled me with the unusual combination of yellow hair, great Spanish black eyes —I mean those with the wonderful long lashes—a skin Saxon-fair, nose, mouth, and chin delicate and in exact harmony, and an expression vivacious and to appearance intelligent. Her dress I hardly noted at the time, but afterward I observed that it consisted of a gown of sea-blue silk, a handsome laced stomacher (higher and more modest than the sort worn by our English ladies of fashion, yet stopping not much short of the bust), and a white Hollands petticoat set off with falbalas. Her hair she wore high, as it were in little successive billows, but all made fast at the top by two long gold pins.

Don Enrique now flourished us forward.

"Isabella, and you, poor Carmen, here are the brave English friends of Captain Giles," he said. "Take heart and thank the Virgin, for they have come to deliver us!"

Each lady in turn dropped a stately Spanish courtesy, and with more resolution than I had looked for, though, to be sure, unsteadily, thanked us. Poor creatures, the colour was struck from their

faces, and their eyes looked pitifully big and questioning.

We all bowed low, and I said something, I know not what, with the thought of heartening them. Yet time was speeding apace, so that I immediately turned back to my comrades.

"Well, what is to be done?" said I.

The captain looked at Mr. Tym, and the latter, after a moment's hesitation, said:

"Let us first understand our bearings, captain. What are the private ways out of this place?"

"By the gardens," answered Sellinger, "and rearward through a court to a narrow street. Thence it is a straight course to the water."

"These gardens border upon what?"

"Considerable streets."

"And the ships and boats have all been taken, and our fellows will have an eye upon the water front," said Mr. Tym, shaking his head. "That will not do."

We were silent for a bit, I racking my brains to hit upon something, when he suddenly resumed: "I have a thought. What is to prevent us from claiming these people as our slaves? That will be but one each, which must be safe enough."

I thought he had hit it, and began to say that nothing could be better.

But the captain shook his head. "I fear it will not serve," he said. "You must know that Don Enrique and the ladies were yesterday chased and well-nigh captured by a party of buccaneers, and I can not doubt that the same fellows would know

them again. Doubtless they would claim them, under the usual freebooters' rule."

"Why, yes," admitted Mr. Tym reluctantly, "since such are the facts."

My hopes were suddenly dashed, and I sighed with disappointment.

"But why suld these callants see them?" put in Mac Ivrach. "Can we no hide them awa'?"

"With difficulty," said Mr. Tym. "It might be managed here, but when it came to the march all must come out. Moreover, I doubt whether any place or house would be suffered to remain barred against searching parties. It would be thought some trick was going on, such as plunder hidden away."

"Then," said the captain, "I see but one course to steer. They must fly. The question is whither?"

"Is there no secret chamber or secure nook on the premises?" I put in as a last possible idea.

The captain shook his head.

"None. A back wine cellar is the best, and that I would not trust. Besides, the runaway servants might betray it. The don did at first think to hide in a little loft in the rear of one of his storehouses, but afterward lost confidence in it and returned. It was on the way thence that the buccaneers fell on the party."

Mr. Tym puffed out his lips and took a turn across the room.

"Was this assault before dark?" he inquired.

"Aye, about four of the clock," answered the captain.

"So that they must have been plainly seen. Yet

stay, were the women compelled to show their faces?"

"Aye, and they counted themselves lucky that they got away with gowns to their backs," said the captain. "They were just by the gate yonder when four buccaneers whipped around from the next street and fell upon them. The old don stood to his arms and wounded the first man, and a Spanish officer who was hiding in the neighbour house sallied out and shot another. With that the remaining two hauled their wind, and I, hearing a racket, rushed forth, followed by Tonto, whereupon they slowly withdrew. In the fight they seriously wounded the officer, for he scarce had strength to crawl into the house again. The ladies' garments were torn in the struggle, and Carmen was seized by the leader of the villains and held for a little, till Don Enrique made him release her. Even then he clung to her for a bit with one hand while he fought with the other. Just then Tonto and I appeared, and none too soon, either."

"Why, then, it is pretty certain that the ladies would be identified, and no less that the house is known," said Mr. Tym with a grave look. "This is more serious than I thought. Ardick," he went on, turning abruptly to me, "ask the don whether he has conceived any plan."

I turned to Don Enrique and put the question.

"Sancta Maria! nothing worth naming," he replied with a doleful shake of the head.

"Señor," interposed Doña Carmen, "it may be that I have thought of something. My house is on the island of Taboga, which is out yonder in the

bay. Could we reach it we might hide in a certain wine cellar, which I am almost sure a few moments' labour would make secret. I had remained and hidden in it, indeed, only I was persuaded the city was safer. Could we but reach the water I believe we could secure a boat, and so reach the island."

"You are brave, señorita," I said, for I could not help admiring this command of her wits at such a time. "But I fear your plan would not serve. For one thing, where would you obtain a boat? Our men must have seized them all."

She faltered a moment, but again her wonderful dark eyes lighted, and she answered eagerly.

"But the fisher village? I conceive there must be boats there. It is above half a league from here, and I am sure your bands have not gone so far. Moreover, it has nothing to tempt robbery. Ah, could we but reach the village!"

"Why, so you shall, if the thing is to be mortally compassed!" I cried in a burst of great pity and compassion. "Stay a moment," I went on, "and I will take counsel with my comrades."

In the fewest words possible I repeated our talk and stated her plan.

"I believe they might fetch out upon the beach," said Sellinger, "for, as I have told you, there is a pretty quiet way to it, but the rub comes afterward."

"Captain," put in Mac Ivrach, who had been quietly listening, "what think ye o' a disguise? Clap the hale three into auld claes, pitting the women in breeks, and daub a bit o' smut on their faces.

Our laddies will hae their drop lang syne, and gae aboot wi' no sharp een."

"Why, that is not so bad," said the captain, brightening. "What say you, Mr. Tym and Ardick?"

"It is at least something definite," said Mr. Tym; "I am for trying it, on the whole."

I agreed with him, and without more ado turned to Don Enrique and the ladies and put the business into Spanish.

They listened eagerly and lost no time in deciding. Indeed, they barely took the words off my tongue ere they broke out in consent. But, in fact, it was easy to see by their anxious looks and pale cheeks that they were desperate enough for almost anything.

This was a great relief to us, for certainly we had nothing left to turn to, unless it might be some desperate action, and that with no reasonable hope of success.

I saw the señora and the other incline their heads a moment, as though in prayer, and the don murmured something under his heavy moustachios.

"And yet," he said aloud, "*á quien madruga á Dios le ayuda?* Come, Isabella, *mía*, and you, Carmen, let us not delay. Meanwhile, *amigos*," he said, turning to us, "you have our deepest gratitude. We go now to make our preparations."

He waved his hand in his stately Spanish fashion, omitting nothing of the full dignity of it, and with his companions passed out and descended the stairs.

It seemed to be as well that we should follow and

take our stations in the hall below, and we proceeded to do this, looking to our arms as we started, for we knew not what rough business we might presently be engaged in.

I think we were not two minutes off the stairs when we heard a confused and swelling sound of voices, and on unbarring one of the neighbour windows I immediately detected the loud rough tones of some of the buccaneers. They were approaching the house, though as yet the high wall hid them from view.

"The fellows are upon us," I called softly to the others.

They hurried into the room and stood by my shoulder.

There could be no mistake about it. The buccaneers were coming along by the wall and were already close upon the gate. Where we stood the trees cut off the view, but the sound was certain and distinct.

"They will scarce give this place the slight, whoever they are," said Mr. Tym. "Should they be the same rascals that fell upon the don we must hear speedily from them."

"In that case they shall hear from us, also," said the captain grimly.

"Hark!" I cried, "they are already at the gate!"

This was indeed true, for now we could hear their banging and bawling.

"It will be a bit before the gate yields," said Mr. Tym. "Pray Heaven they batter at it awhile, and give our friends the better start!"

"But they will not long back and fill there," said Sellinger. "If nobody opens they will be over the wall. I wish the don would hasten."

"They are coming at last," I said, much relieved, as the door into the rearward rooms opened.

The don, followed by the others came out, and I perceived they were ready.

CHAPTER XXIII.

OF THE FLIGHT OF THE DON AND HIS PARTY, AND THE DILEMMA THAT CAPTAIN TOWLAND PUT US IN. LIKEWISE OF A DREADFUL DISCOVERY.

THIS was the manner of their disguise: the old don wore a kind of Dutch coat belted about the waist and extending to the tops of a pair of rough sea-boots, and on his head was a great flapping hat with the forebrim lopped down. His face and hands were smeared with dirt, and under his arm he carried an old basket.

The ladies were attired in a somewhat similar fashion. Doña Isabella wore a long coat and heavy boots (her skirts she had, of course, discarded), and the rest of her visible dress consisted of an old cap with side flaps and a curly wig. The wig was tucked chiefly under the cap, and at a glance might well pass for her proper hair. She had bedaubed her face and hands and carried a fisher's spear. As for poor Doña Carmen I observed that she had put on a kind of mixed garb, consisting of a high straw hat, a blue jacket, a long knit vest, coarse hose and well-

worn jackboots. She had smutted her face and hands, and carried over her shoulder a well-stuffed bag, the seeming weight of which made her stoop a little, so that her face was not quite revealed. Her hat was luckily too big for her, whereby she was able to thrust it well down, and thus conceal the abundance of her hair. To my thinking hers was the poorest of the three disguises, as the jacket did not fully hide the contours of her figure, and the vest was too loose at the waist and too tight below. However, whether good or bad, all must now go as it was, and, indeed, nothing was expected except that the business might serve at a short distance, or closer, if the enemy happened to be drunk or careless. At best it was a desperate risk, but a desperate chance was now all that remained. As for old Tonto (who, of course, was to accompany the party), he had no need of a disguise, and appeared in his former dress.

"Have you concealed weapons, for emergency?" I hastily asked Don Enrique.

"*Sí*," he replied briefly, with a sign toward his breast.

"They must hasten," exclaimed Mr. Tym. "It is a wonder our fellows are not already at the door. Fetch a good look rearward, Ardick, to see that the coast is clear, and after that no delay."

I was only too willing to obey, for the case indeed pressed, and with the single word "Come" to the don, I flew to the rearward door and unbarred it. A glance out showed no person in sight. A considerable court, walled in on both sides, extended to the little rearward street. From here it was the

first and most dangerous stage of the journey to the shore.

"God reward you all!" said the don, with a sign of his hand in farewell; and he stepped bravely out. His companions followed, not forgetting a fervent "*Adios!*" and we stood in the door and in a silence of anxiety saw them pass down the court.

Nothing as yet appeared, and presently they were at the opening of the street. Another breath of suspense and they had rounded the corner.

"By Heaven, happily compassed!" exclaimed the captain with a great breath of relief.

"It is, indeed, a good start," said Mr. Tym, himself giving over something of his anxious bearing.

"I trust the disguises will serve," I said with a sigh. "In truth, they were not of the best."

"There you are right," said the captain. "Yet, perhaps they will deceive drunken or careless eyes. Marry! 'twas rare luck that the togs were at hand at all. The fisher suits were shed but yesterday by their owners. They were two fellows that the don's money persuaded to put on headpieces and backplates."

But at this point we heard a loud shouting from the front of the house.

"Ah, our fellows are in," said Mr. Tym; and forthwith we shut and barred this door and hastened to the other.

Mr. Tym proved to be right. On opening the wicket we saw one leaf of the gate open, and the buccaneers crowding in.

The captain looked inquiringly at Mr. Tym, and fetched a good courageous breath, and Mac Ivrach

and I saw to our weapons. Of course we had no wish to fight, but we could not tell what our reckless and angry comrades might attempt, and were resolved to be prepared.

"We must parley with them," said Mr. Tym. "All will gain time."

"Do you be spokesman," said the captain. "Here they come, and well swollen with choler or I have no eyes!"

He stepped aside, giving way to the supercargo, and as he did so I heard the heavy slap of the approaching feet.

"The leader is that ferocious Towland," Mr. Tym turned his head to say. As he did so the gang appeared to halt, and the voice of the fierce captain hailed us.

"Within, there! How dare you hold thus against us? Open, or it will go very ill with you!"

"And why say you so?" Mr. Tym immediately put his face to the wicket and coolly answered. "Have we not as good a right to the loot of this place as you?"

"Why, 'tis the little graybeard!" cried one man; and at that they made a stir of their arms, letting the butts of their guns fall, and there was a bit of silence.

"We were not aware that our own people were in possession," I heard Towland then in a surly and vexed tone reply. "Nevertheless," he went on, "we have the right to come in, so open the door."

"Why, look you," answered Mr. Tym—and I could see by the wrinkling of his side face that he was smiling—"I can not recall that there is any rule

against bolting and barring. Suppose one were intent on the capture of a slave, for instance, must he needs let everybody in while he is about it? Slaves, you are aware, are not common spoil, as are goods and money."

"Nay, this is all idle talk and away from the purpose!" said Towland impatiently. "Open the door, and be speedy about it, or the business will reach further than words!"

"Let me at least confer with my friends," answered Mr. Tym, still speaking moderately. "I am not alone in this matter."

"Speedy counsels, then," growled Towland. "We will not be put off."

"Well, friends," said Mr. Tym, facing about and preserving his same voice and manner, "what say you? You have heard Captain Towland's demand."

"For my part," said the captain, raising his voice so that those outside could hear, "I desire a little time for deliberation. I would know my rights, and if I am to lower my colours, wherefore."

"Aweel," said Mac Ivrach, speaking up in his turn, "and sae it strikes mysel'. I wadna come to decide in a blink."

"Which is my thought, likewise," I promptly put in.

"You hear," said Mr. Tym, speaking again from the wicket. "My companions are not clear of their course. They would have a little time for reflection. So, in truth, would I."

The fellows broke into murmurs of rage, and two or three roundly swore.

"Look you," cried Towland in a kind of despera-

tion, and yet with a certain measure of rough entreaty, as I thought, "we will not be cozened. We have rights here. Nay, to come to the heart of the matter, we want the old don and the women. We pursued them yesterday, and but for a twist of luck at the pinch would have had them. I myself all but secured the young señorita. You will perceive, therefore, that we have the first right here, and, like sensible men, will abandon your contention. Aye, to give you the final proof, the owner of this house is Don Enrique de Cavodilla, and it was his niece—though my memory halts at her name—that I laid hands on. By our laws a slave seized is a slave passed to ownership, and that you well know."

Mr. Tym turned back to us, his countenance grown serious.

"This is not well. I fear the rascal has the right of it—I mean as to the rule."

"I am sure of it," said I reluctantly. "I have a clear thought of how it runs."

"Then, if they have the right to claim the slaves, I conceive they have the further right to come in and search for them," said Mr. Tym with a vexed gesture. "Well, say we yield? To refuse would be to avail no one, and I conceive our friends now have a very hopeful start."

We were compelled to agree with him, and without further words he unbarred and opened the door.

Towland and his men sullenly pressed in, and, we giving back, they quickly filled all the fore part of the hall. I now had a chance to count them and note who they were, and perceived there were ten of them besides Towland himself, and that all but two

were of his own command. These exceptions were Paul Cradde and one Gabriel, a negro. Both of these belonged to our own—that is, to Phibbert's company.

Towland looked at us with a lowering brow, but said nothing, and the men after a brief staring about made forward and began to scatter over the house. Towland seemed to hang in the wind for a bit, and at first I thought he meant to say something to us, but if so he changed his mind, for, in the end, he wheeled about and followed some of his crew up the stairs.

We exchanged significant glances, but for a little did not budge, wishing to avoid any dangerous seeming of haste. At last as none of the men returned—the most of them were now above, where we could hear them knocking about and calling to one another—we passed a whispered word, and all stole quietly out. As we made down the walk I heard a considerable noise, and thought that the men were demolishing some doors or partitions, but fortunately no further heed seemed to be paid to us.

Fetching at last into the street, we turned in the direction of the water and pushed along at a sharp walk. It was in all our minds, though we stayed not to talk about it, to gain the first leftward street or passage, and thence continue till we obtained some knowledge or were satisfied of the safety of the fugitives. But about this time I began to find my attention in a measure taken by a new matter. The buccaneers had now dispersed pretty well over the city, and, having broken into a considerable number of houses and ill treated the inmates, a great noise

and pitiful outcry began to arise. We had barely emerged into the street when five or six buccaneers ran laughing out of a neighbouring court, and immediately I perceived they were dragging upon a rope, at the end of which stumbled a bloody and half-naked man. He was mumbling and wailing in Spanish, and scarce seemed to know what was happening to him, and this I presently ceased to wonder at, for I discovered that they had put out both his eyes. I was struck a little faint with the horror of the thing, and had much ado to restrain my anger and detestation, but upon a quick thought of the uselessness and, indeed, danger of it, finally managed to do so. The wretches and their victim presently turned into a by-street, and we lost them, but not for a little the cries, which endured like a trail of pain in the air.

We had fetched to a stand, but presently made forward again, and at last came to the leftward-turning street, and none too soon, for we would have no more of these doleful and dreadful sights. By this time the shouting and divers kinds of noises had vastly increased, and it seemed that the sack was now really doing, the more especially as we began to hear women's voices rising above the other notes.

We gladly turned the corner, and at last broke into a run, in this way quickly leaving the acuteness of the noises behind us and gaining the rear street.

All was comparatively quiet here, a few voices from the depths of the closed houses faintly crying out, and a hostile dog now and then dashing forth

and barking, but nothing of a violent or disorderly nature going on.

"I think they have got fairly off," said the captain with a breath of relief. "It is clear the buccaneers have not yet penetrated to this quarter, and the time is more than sufficient to fetch the beach."

"I would not croak," said I, "but I am less hopeful. There is the guard on the ships, who might easily espy them, and then our straggling parties are poking about in all directions."

"We can soon learn how the matter has gone," said Mr. Tym. "We have but to continue to the water side, and proceed a little way from there toward this fisher village. If we see and hear nothing amiss we may rest in reasonable content that they are safe."

"Well, we would not turn back without that assurance," said I. "Let us proceed."

We pushed on down this street, accordingly, and when we had come into the next turned to the left, and so continued to the outskirts of the town. We learned nothing of moment, or touching the business in hand, and, thinking it of no use to proceed farther, and, indeed, supposing it might not be prudent to do so (lest we might be spied upon by some of Towland's party), we descended to the beach, and so walked for a time up and down.

As we did so we could hear the cries and other distressful noises from the town, and were melancholly at the wickedness and havoc going on there.

After some little time, it being now near noon, and we beginning to be hungry, we thought it best

to return to the castle. We bent our steps that way, therefore, and might have proceeded a fourth part of the distance when Mac Ivrach suddenly gave a little cry.

"Look yonner! Nay, nay! a's amiss!"

We hastily sprang to his side, for he was standing at the moment on a bit of ledge, while we were below, and to our horror discovered what it was that had fetched out the cry. In a kind of little depression, and partly hidden by the overhanging crest of the ledge, lay the corpse of Don Enrique de Cavodilla!

CHAPTER XXIV.

OF THE THINGS THAT PAUL CRADDE TOLD US, TOGETHER WITH THE CONCEPTION OF A DARING PLAN.

We looked at one another as men confounded. When was this dreadful business accomplished, and by whom?

Mr. Tym was the first to collect himself.

"We have been deceived, friends," he said with a sigh, "or rather we have deceived ourselves. These poor people got no fair start, as we thought, but were seized at the very outset. While we were following, as we deemed, on their track, they were being hurried toward the castle."

"But this murder?" I cried in vast anxiety. "How came it about? Alas! and there may be others. Nay, let us search this place thoroughly, that we may know whether it be so or not."

We left the body at this, and looked narrowly all about, but made no like dreadful discovery.

"To answer your question, Ardick," said Mr. Tym, as we finally gave over, "I opine Don Enrique tried to escape, and in doing so was slain. Alas! poor gentleman, he lacked not a spirit! Well, and how say you? Shall we cover the remains, and push on? It may be we can yet render some service to the living."

"Let us by all means do so," said the captain with a sigh.

I was only too anxious to reach the castle, and, Mac Ivrach being of the same mind, we tarried only till we could cover the body (using large stones for the purpose), and started on.

As we drew near the castle I observed a considerable stir, many figures of the buccaneers passing and repassing, and some pushing forward little groups of unarmed people, who must be captives. Not a few women were among them, for I could see the fulness of their garments and the bright colours of their scarfs and other like decorations.

At last we drew nigh, and climbed the plateau to the gate. I was now able to observe with more exactness the things we had till now seen at a distance, but I confess that my mind was so full of our especial business that I took no close notice of them, though at another time I had not failed to do so. I did observe, to be sure, some of the more pitiful of the women captives, in particular one poor creature that wept continually, and was led along with her hands lashed together, but the details of her story no one by me knew. Again I did take notice of one poor gray-

haired woman—her I thought of a station above the common, judging by her looks and dress—who wept not, but most pitifully groaned, and when I caught the talk of those about me I learned that she had just seen her only son dreadfully tortured, so that he was like to die, but if he lived must be a miserable cripple. After her came a young and comely woman whose ears and fingers were bleeding, as though she had been hastily and brutally stripped of her jewels, and whose chief garment was a man's long coat. She, one standing by me said, was the daughter of some great hidalgo, though the name he did not know.

All this, I say, I learned, and yet without much inquiry, for my mind was now more and more on edge to discover the fate of the poor Lady Carmen. At last it was our turn, and we hastily passed the guard and entered the court. I must pause here to say that the interior parts of the castle were in some ways peculiar, since the chief hall was upon the nether floor, and was reached at once after passing through a strong arched gateway and a little passage. The offices and lesser rooms were beyond this hall, and the dungeons (though this I learned afterward) were directly beneath it. The quarters for the soldiers were meant to be in a rearward wing, but the present garrison, having no strict discipline, were making a billet of whatsoever places they saw fit. These things had best be mentioned here, as they will make clearer the parts of the narrative to follow.

When we had gotten into the court we found much stir, many pushing about intent on disposing

of their booty, and others making for the kitchen, whence we caught the smell of cookery. We had scarce landed within the gate when I espied Paul Cradde, by the piece of raw meat in his hand bound for his dinner.

"Yonder goes Cradde," I said to my companions. "Can we find a more suitable person to give us the news?"

Without waiting for their answer, I hailed him and brought him to.

He wore no very amiable face, yet was civil enough in his air, and without hesitation I set about my purpose.

"We are four passing hungry men, shipmate, and have not yet learned the ropes of this craft. Where got you this meat, and where is the other prog and the wine?"

Cradde, with all his faults, was not by nature sour and crusty; rather the reverse. His old-time good-humoured look returned as I spoke.

"Why, as to the meat," he made answer, "in that lowermost office. The lighter prog is in no set place, but in the lower rooms, as the purveyors have chanced to leave it. The wine is but little in quantity, our fellows fetching it in, as to the main, in their inside. Yet a few bottles are yonder, as you may see."

He pointed to a shadowed angle in the wall, where, as I now saw, stood a basket half filled with bottles.

"I am beholden to you," said I, and hastened to secure the basket. "If you are not in haste," I went on carelessly, "I will fetch a piece of the meat, and we will mess with you. It will seem like old times,

and, moreover—to be out with it—we would have a little talk with you."

"I have no objection," he answered. "Fetch the meat and what else you wish. I will wait."

I lost no time in doing this, and, possessed of a good slab of the beef and two or three loaves of bread, I signed to my companions, and we fell into his wake. He had us across the court to the kitchens, where we roasted the meat, and thence, having first procured some wooden trenchers and a little salt, we passed through a postern gate and established ourselves at the foot of the wall. Here was comparative seclusion, as well as some escape from the heat, which was now intense.

As soon as we were established I made Cradde acquainted with Captain Sellinger, relating at the same time, though in brief, the captain's story. I did this, meaning, in the first place, to establish better fellowship, and also that I could (by indirection) give some colouring to the morning's adventure. In short, I made it appear that our business at the don's was legitimate—that is, from the buccaneers' standpoint,—and that the matter was fetched about by the captain, who hated his late master.

Cradde was no very deep fellow, and easily swallowed this yarn, which when he had done he was in the state of mind that I desired.

"Well," said I, feigning an indifferent air, "I fancy none of us are the richer by the morning's undertaking. I see you make no brags of the wealth you found."

"For a good reason," he said with a grunt. "We found only some garments and household gear. No

great of that, either. I fancy the old rascal must have hidden the chief part."

"I believe he did," put in the captain, "or that was the notion of the servants, though I am not quite able to confirm it."

"As to the slaves," I began again, "we fared no better. Not a soul was in the house. The servants, indeed, the captain told us, had already fled, but we thought to find at least some of the family."

"Now that," said Cradde with a puzzled look, "is passing strange. They could barely have vacated the place when you entered. Indeed, they were caught but a pebble's toss from the water side. Had you but peeped from the rearward door I think you must have seen them."

"Ah, how stupid!" I cried. "But, in truth, we thought only of the house. And so they were captured? Was it, then, the entire family?"

"Aye," answered Cradde with a sigh. "The beautiful daughter and all. Would I had been the captor!"

"Niece," corrected the captain. "Not Don Enrique's daughter. But that matters not."

"Niece, then," said Cradde with a melancholy air. "It helps not the case. That rascally Blyte secured her."

"Captain Blyte!" I exclaimed in surprise. My heart sank withal. He was another like Towland and Cradde. "And how was that?" I continued in my former tone.

"Why, the fellow must come up from the water while we were making tomfools of ourselves a-searching the house," answered Cradde, "and, lo!

they fairly walked into his arms. Still, all is not quite settled. He does not yet possess the prize."

"And how is that?" put in Mr. Tym.

"Why, Towland disputes his right," answered Cradde. "Aye, and that fiercely. The two all but came to blows."

"Towland claiming under the law of first hand-laying?" pursued Mr. Tym.

"The same."

"And Blyte?"

"Well, I am not very clear, but something in this sort," answered Cradde: "Blyte would have it that the men on that first day were sent into the city solely to secure the place, and not to spoil, and that, in consequence, Towland has no rights dating from that time."

"And how is this dispute to be settled?" asked the captain."

We breathlessly listened for the answer.

"Morgan will do it," answered Cradde. "He has taken the lady out of their hands and locked her up. He swears he will not pass judgment till the morrow, when they shall have commanded their choler."

We had some ado to conceal our relief and vast satisfaction.

"But there were others?" resumed the captain, after a little. "I refer not to the poor don, for we know he is slain, but how as to his wife? Aye, and there was an old servant."

"Both dead, likewise," said Cradde indifferently. "The old dame must run before a sword, when it was aimed at her husband, and was grievously

wounded. She died in a little time after reaching the castle. The slave—I know not just how it was, but he offended Blyte, and was presently despatched. They flung both the bodies into the water, where, I doubt not, the sharks soon made an end of them."

We questioned him a little further, but brought out nothing of present moment. The old don, as we had supposed, proved to have been slain while trying to escape. The dinner ended, we presently parted with Cradde, and in a little time—avoiding an appearance of haste—returned again to the beach. Here it was now intensely hot, but we continued till we came to an old boathouse, in the shadow of which we sat down. Our talk ran on at some length, but there is no need that I should give more than the substance. The chief thing was that we were resolved to have done with Morgan and his crew. We were also of one mind—though this, indeed, was pretty desperate—to deliver, if we could, the poor Lady Carmen.

"Well, then," said Mr. Tym, when we had reached this point, "these generals being settled, let us to the details. Speaking after a broad fashion, for we may not yet lay exact plans, seeing that we do not know all the facts, I counsel some swift and audacious proceeding. Say to watch our opportunity, and, having quietly forced the lady's door, slip her boldly out under the buccaneers' noses? Remember, she will be disguised."

"That is to my mind," said the captain. "A bold and speedy stroke it should be. In truth, there is little time for any other."

"Why, that looks feasible," said I. "But now a

bit further. Say you have her out, what then? Whither would you fly? It may not be possible to procure horses, and afoot would be too slow. Again, some suspicious gang might challenge us."

"Well, then," said the captain, "why seek to go by land? Why not by water?"

"By water?" said I, in some surprise. "Is not that still more hazardous? Besides, where can we come by a suitable boat?"

"That," said Sellinger, "would be no feat. Betwixt now and sundown I warrant I can lay hold on one that will suit our purpose."

"Whither would you go?" asked Mr. Tym.

"Well, perhaps to Delasco, which is a place but a few leagues to the south, or to Buenaventura, which may be two hundred," answered the captain. "I suppose these or any other would serve."

We went into the matter a little further, but in the end came to the captain's plan.

"Then do you go now," he said, "and try to find out the location of the señorita's room, and likewise fetch what you can of stores and water. Doubtless you can obtain enough for the purpose, as we are not likely to make a long voyage, and, moreover, there may be somewhat of the kind aboard. Meanwhile I will search for the craft herself."

"Content," we said, and while we returned to the castle, the captain set off in the direction of the jetties.

CHAPTER XXV.

OF THE PROGRESS OF OUR PLAN.

On the way to the castle we came to a resolution as to the fashion of our proceeding. Mr. Tym was to spy out the whereabouts of the señorita, and Mac Ivrach and I were to secure and conceal the stores. This done, we were to meet and take further counsel. Having concluded on this plan, we forthwith set about carrying it out. We parted just inside the gate, and while Mr. Tym made for the great door—I mean that to the chief structure itself—Mac Ivrach and I slipped around to the offices. Here we found the same confusion as before, only now there were fewer about, and having slyly secured two great sacks, we carried out such food as was at hand and speedily filled them. We took care to do this unobserved, though I think we might safely have been bolder, for those about were near all in liquor, or busied with their own concerns.

We took the sacks to one of the rear offices and concealed them, and returned to the outer region of the court. We scarce expected to see Mr. Tym, or to learn that he had finished his part of the business, and in this we were not mistaken, for he did not at once appear. We lounged about, affecting little interest in what was doing (playing this part that we might seem consistent with our conduct before), and so continued till at last Mr. Tym came out. He moved in an indifferent fashion, not very fast, but yet not overdoing his part, and so drew presently

along to us. My pulse ran with some disorder, by this time, for the delay was trying, and, moreover, this was almost the heart of the business.

"All is well," he said, with a careless-seeming nod—it was marvellous how my blood started in my veins at the words. "How fares it with the other?"

"Likewise well," I almost falteringly answered.

He drew a bit nearer, that chance passers might not hear.

"This is the gist of the matter," he said: "She is shut up in one of the first-story chambers. To reach it you pass up the chief staircase, and so by an outside passage. The chamber is at the end, and is directly above the outwork. It therefore overlooks the water."

"And how learned you all this?" I asked. I scarce dared believe we had gotten so far along in the undertaking and nothing contrary happened.

"Why, pretty simply," he said with a smile. "As I was passing through the hall I met Morgan, and, if you will credit it, he delivered to me the whole matter."

This made me fetch a little breath.

"It was an easy matter," went on Mr. Tym coolly. "I did but meet him, as I say, and after we had talked a little—he running on rather loosely, being somewhat in wine—he spoke of his own accord of the señorita. He praised her beauty and swore that it were a shame to deal with her save gently, and more to like purpose. I finally drew him on to disclose where she was, and this, I may say, I did easily. After some further talk, I took leave of him, and while he passed into one of the under

rooms I descended to the dungeons. I did this that I might seem consistent, having declared that I had some small curiosity about these places. From the dungeons I came again to the hall and thence ventured to peep above-stairs, where I found a man on guard, and so turned back. The fellow did not observe me, as I had approached softly and his attention was elsewhere, and this I was glad of, as I did not wish to arouse his suspicions. I could think of nothing more that might profitably be done, and so I returned hither."

"Why, I count that excellent," I said. "Indeed, it is beyond our reasonable expectation."

"A less favourable thing," he went on to say, "is that there are two or three windows in the passage, and from the glimpse I had of them all are set with stout iron bars. This moved me to think that nothing could be done in that quarter, since the bars alone must be a great obstacle, to say nothing of the outer work below and the dangerous and conspicuous descent into it."

"Well," I said, not much put down, "this but shifts the manner of the risk, as I opine, and scarce increases it. In the end the business is to be accomplished by audacity, so it is accomplished at all."

"I grant you," said Mr. Tym. "But now, since we have made an end here, let us see if we can learn how it fares with the captain. In truth, I have some anxiety."

So, indeed, did Mac Ivrach and I, and I may say that this matter was now uppermost in my mind since the other was concluded. We therefore dropped the discourse and set off once more for the water.

As yet the captain was not in sight, though we scanned the water in all directions for him; wherefore we judged that he had not yet succeeded in his undertaking. The sun still beat down with great fervour, and we were glad to reach the little boat-house and bestow ourselves in its shade. Not many people were astir, though we saw a few buccaneers on the ships, and some at intervals passed to and from the shore. All the while the cries and other noises in the city persisted, but did not reach us clearly, save now and then an uncommon high shriek. We talked a little, but not to much purpose, for we were looking every moment for Sellinger, and so passed, it might be, half an hour.

At last, just as we were beginning to feel some disquiet, a small boat popped out of the concealment of the neighbour jetty, and there, to be sure, was the captain.

He shot his craft up to the beach and leaped out, and as we made forward gave us a cheerful nod.

"I have secured an indifferent little sloop," he said. "How fared you?"

We had him into the shade, and in a few words made him acquainted with our success. Then he gave us his account. It seemed that he meant to have no commerce with the buccaneers, fearing lest he might rouse suspicion, but instead watched for a native fisherman, and was at last fortunate enough to bring one to. With him, after a little bantering (each had some trouble in understanding the other), he managed to conclude a bargain. The craft was a clumsy affair, it seemed: in length it might be seven-and-twenty feet, by above eight in the beam, and

was undecked, though it had a rude sort of cuddy. The single sail was old and patched, but looked to be fit for moderate service, and was set to a boom and a short gaff. She had no vessels or any kind of tools or implements aboard, being furnished solely with a pair of rude oars. Nevertheless she appeared stanch, and would, he thought, be likely to do the work required of her.

This explanation pleased us greatly, for now matters might be said to be roughhewn to our purpose. We asked the captain a few questions, such as where the sloop lay—which, it seemed, was not over a hundred yards above the jetty, and well inshore—and as to the person he bought her of, which he answered by saying that he was a simple fellow, and beyond doubt had no suspicions.

"Very well, then," said Mr. Tym, when the matter had reached this stage, "we seem to want nothing now but to complete the details of our plan. Let us go at once about it."

We were at a good deal of pains here, debating many things, but, after all, the matter sifted down to this: toward the middle of the night, before the moon should rise—which it did now very late—we were to slip up to the passage leading to the señorita's room, beguile and overpower the guard, gag and bind him, and force the señorita's door. A few words from me would explain what was afoot, and, having thrust the guard into the chamber and secured him there, we would quietly descend to the hall and boldly pass out. Of course, our main reliance must be upon the general carelessness and disorder, and upon the fact that nothing of the business was sus-

pected. As for the minor details, it seemed best that Mr. Tym should lead off, and at the point where he wished us to fall upon the soldier should make a certain prearranged sign.

All this being finally resolved, and the time still wanting some hours of night, we boarded the captain's boat, being minded both to escape as much as might be from the dolorous noises and to test the craft's ability. We found her what he had described, but likewise dirty and disordered. We brought her to such neatness as we could, failing not, as well, to mend and strengthen such parts of her as seemed weakest, and in chief the rigging, standing and otherwise. We finally ran out as far as the islands of Taboga and Taboguilla, and thence stood for some distance down the bay. I must say here that as we passed the island of Taboga I thought of the poor lady, she having formerly dwelt there, and being now reduced to such a miserable plight! This reflection, indeed, brought the water to my eyes, as I am not ashamed to confess. Both Taboga and Taboguilla were now in the possession of the buccaneers, and in fact I caught the flash of armour and made out some figures moving about, as we stood away from Taboga. It was easy to see what a hell they must be making of that beautiful place, and indeed this afterward proved to be but too true, as those who have written the chronicle of this great but wicked expedition have so well set forth. In short, dumb nature herself suffered from them, for they destroyed trees and vines, and trampled down the very flowers in the gardens in the wantonness of their mischief!

Having left this sad spot, we fetched some way

to the south, and finally came about and in a failing wind ran back to our anchorage. By this time it was close upon sundown, and late enough for us to be thinking of returning to the castle. In fact, we had still some preparations to make, such as bringing down the stores—not forgetting a breaker of water—and an extra supply of clothing and weapons. Included in the clothing must be some for the poor lady, though I was sorry that none of it could be of a sort suitable to her sex. We likewise thought of an iron bar, or pry, with which to force the chamber door. All these matters, I will say in brief, we attended to, in no way encountering any mishap or seeming to arouse any suspicions. Finally, we hid the little skiff, and returned for the last time to the castle. It was now quite dark, the twilight in those parts being exceeding brief, and wanting no great while of the hour we had set for our undertaking. This, it will be remembered, was the early part of the night, before the confusion and disorder were like to have abated, and ere yet it was moonrise. At last it wanted only a few minutes of nine, and as we deemed that nothing was to be gained by waiting longer, we saw to our weapons and made along to the arched gate.

CHAPTER XXVI.

OF OUR FURTHER GOOD FORTUNE.

THE door at the end of the passage stood open, and we caught a small glimmer of light and heard voices. Pushing on, though I confess with some un-

easiness on my part (for I thought of Morgan), we presently found ourselves in the great hall. Here were perhaps a score of our fellows, the most sprawled about or sitting on the long table, and only four or five talking. A few had horns or flagons by them, and others were smoking, but I perceived that nearly the half seemed to be heavily asleep. Perhaps three or four candles were burning, put in a cloud, indeed, by the tobacco smoke, and bringing out little of the immediate surroundings with distinctness. Of the persons who were talking, one lay flat on the table and, by the bandage about his head, should be wounded, and another paced up and down, his arm in a sling.

"In chief these are fellows who are drunk or disabled," I thought, "and therefore in the better case, as far as we are concerned."

We were past them presently, none hailing us, and having gone out by the rearward door were at last in the hall of the stairs. Here it was dark, save for the little illumination of the buccaneers' candles, and all deserted and quiet. We did not close the door after us, both because the light was of some use and because we thought the act would seem suspicious, though, indeed, the fellows had scarce appeared to notice us. One thing now puzzled me a little, which was that it seemed so dark at the top of the stairs. To be sure, the guard might have deposited his lanthorn, or candle at the far end of the passage, but even then, I thought, some faint light would show. However, there was little time to think on this, even supposing it to be of import, for Mr. Tym had already begun to ascend the stairs. We fell

into his train, the captain first, I next, and Mac Ivrach last, and all crept softly up. I now thought a faint bit of light was stealing down from the passage, but guessed that it might be nothing but starlight. I glanced as well as I could by the captain, and kept Mr. Tym's figure in a vague way in view, feeling, with some quickening of the pulse, that it must now be soon that he would reach the top and come under the observation of the guard. The flight was long, but presently I saw his figure cut out black and more distinct, and knew he was in the passage and obstructing a window. It was now certain that there was no light, save of the stars, and this must be the reason why the guard had not as yet perceived him. He turned, for I caught the narrowing of his shape, and immediately the window was free again, and now he had surely advanced down the passage.

I slipped alongside the captain, and he looked at me, the wonderment on his face coming out in the faint light. We were now close to the top of the flight, but as yet could not command the passage, the continued wall cutting us off. Of a sudden I heard a soft, long step, and, the window above darkening, I looked up and saw Mr. Tym.

"All's well," he said, in a sharp whisper full of relief. "The coast is clear."

This was such brave news that for an instant it fairly brought the captain and me to a standstill. Yet only while one might catch his breath. We made a straddling bound of it to the top, Mac Ivrach close behind.

The starlight came in at three barred windows and fetched out the place in a dim, but yet resolv-

able fashion, and, truly enough, save ourselves, not a soul was there.

"We must improve the opportunity," went on Mr. Tym as soon as we were fairly beside him. "Yonder is the door; Master Ardick, do you hail the señorita, and then proceed as speedily as you can with the breaking in."

The business wanted no more discussion, and quickly we were all before the door. A very faint bit of light came from the open keyhole, but all within was quiet. To make quite certain that the door was locked, I first gently tried it, but found, as I expected, the bolt shot. Stooping then to the keyhole, I spoke the señorita's name, raising my voice as high as I dared.

There was a little stir, and presently the lady's voice, low and shaken, answered.

"Who is there?"

"Friends, lady. Captain Sellinger and others that you wot of. We have come to deliver you."

I heard her give a little cry, and she seemed to have come up close to the door.

"We are about to break in," I continued. "Yet, stay,—are you dressed?"

"Yes, señor. Ah, the saints have heard my prayers!"

"She understands the matter," I said back to my companions. "Hand me the pry, Mac Ivrach."

The Scotchman had fetched along this implement—a short bar of iron, with one end flattened into a splay—and now passed it over. I jammed it in midway up, near the lock, and gave a heave. The door was of wood, but heavy and strongly set, and

this first effort only made it strain and crack. Growing impatient and anxious, I punched again, and this time threw my weight against the bar. The bolt instantly snapped and the door swung quivering open. The light within—a single candle—hardly brought out the place with distinctness, yet one glance resolved nearly all. Just within the entrance stood the señorita, pale, and with her yellow hair falling down her shoulders. At her back were the details of the room, mainly a little cumbrous furniture, and the scant drapery of the barred windows.

As soon as the poor creature got the light fairly upon us, and especially as soon as she made out the captain, she ran forward and fell on her knees at his feet.

"Oh, señor, may Christ reward you! I had all but given up hope!"

"Why, it is all right, señorita," said the captain awkwardly. He forgot that the lady did not understand his English. He gave her his hand and she rose, looking sweetly and gratefully at the rest of us.

But this was no time for sentiment. We immediately withdrew a little and took counsel together. "There seems to be no new phase of the matter," said Mr. Tym. "The señorita's disguise will still serve. I note, however, that she has removed the stains from her face, and these it might be well, in some sort, to renew. Her skin shows a thought too fair."

"Look you, there is a broad hat," said the captain, pointing to what seemed at first like a shadow in a neighbouring nook. "Why will not that suf-

fice? Aye, for it can be made to lop down, which will help to conceal her face."

Upon inspection we found that the hat did, indeed, possess the advantages mentioned. Upon further inspection the nook was found to contain a little table, and on this was lying a black camlet cloak. Close by stood a strong cross-staff.

These seemed lucky discoveries, though I can hardly consider them remarkable, since all were common things, likely to be found in such a room. Upon trial the great hat could be made almost to hide the señorita's face, and the cloak, thrown carelessly over one shoulder (it would scarce do to seem close wrapped in it, on account of the heat of the weather), would help to conceal the outlines of her figure.

These few and simple preparations made, we seemed ready to depart.

"Say the captain and I go first," said Mr. Tym. "The lady and you, Ardick, would do well to come next, and Mac Ivrach can bring up the rear. We must all take care to stroll along carelessly."

"Yet a moment," said I, as a thought struck me. "Must we pass through the great hall? Is there no back way?"

"There is," replied Mr. Tym, "but it is locked, and I believe the key is lost. I should have acquainted you with this before, and indeed its importance makes it strange that I did not, but in truth I quite forgot it. Yet, after all, I am in doubt if we should gain much if the passage were open. We must pass the descent leading to the dungeons, and Morgan and others are often going or coming thence.

Besides, the hall is no very desperate matter, and at least leads directly out of doors, which the other does not."

I had no more to say, and we took a final look at our weapons and prepared to start. The door during this time had been left a little ajar, that we might hear any approaching steps, and as a last precaution the captain flung it wide open and listened.

The faint murmurs of the talkers below could be heard, and now and then a thump, as of one getting off the table or pounding idly with his glass or a weapon, but in all nothing suspicious.

"Well," said Mr. Tym at length, "let us start."

We fell into the understood order, accordingly, and in silence passed out into the passage. Mac Ivrach lingered a little, and took the precaution to close the door, and we were thus, for the time, in comparative darkness, the stars fetching the place out only in a faint glimmer.

I touched my elbow to the señorita's to encourage her, and in this fashion we slipped softly along, and without hearing an alarming sound reached the head of the stairs. Here Mr. Tym halted, but after a glance began to descend, and we, catching the noises now plainer from below, but still nothing menacing, quietly followed. As before, we found this rearward hall safe and deserted. Mr. Tym gave a glance back at us, as though to see that all were ready, and with a bold step passed on and turned in at the door. Captain Sellinger fell a careless pace or two behind and followed. I did not hesitate, but as I felt the lady tremble whispered to her to take heart, for

there was but small danger, and so saying pressed her arm hard with mine, and with that we passed in.

All was as we had left it. The buccaneers were still sitting or lying about, save he who nursed his arm and walked up and down, and the haze of the tobacco smoke continued. We marched down the hall, I, as I must confess, in some perturbation, and made toward the vaulted passage. It seemed an interminable distance, but, to my tremendous relief, no attempt was made to stop us, and at last we passed safely inside. The first part of the strain was now over, and with a congratulatory look or two, but no words, for those were too risky, we continued on and entered the court. Here we found the former disorder and confusion, some of the buccaneers straggling about laughing or roaring drunken songs, some ordering their arms, and others in groups talking. Morgan was not in sight, but Towland's rival, the savage and hard-fighting Captain Blyte, was sprawled near by on a bench. His back was luckily toward us. There was but a single other captain in sight, one Steaves, who was lounging in the main gate. This last person, as I thought, was the officer of the guard, for I noted that three of his company were close by, and that one carried a lanthorn. Two more buccaneers, though I could not say who, seemed to be stationed at the other gate—that is, the postern,—for I could catch the gleam of their armour, as they paced to and fro.

Mr. Tym was not for halting, and led us boldly to the main gate. The postern, as I might say here, was the more obscure and the guard smaller, but it was the farther removed, and again we must pass

the wings of the castle, where men were frequently dodging in and out. Finally, this gate gave upon the edge of the plateau, below which was the bold, exposed beach. The main gate, on the other hand, let us at once upon a considerable street, and this was crossed by other streets and was darkened in many places by trees. Mr. Tym thus proved his wisdom by preferring the chief gate, and, in brief, all went well, for we passed safely out. I was now for thinking the danger as good as over, and drew a great breath of relief, and spoke a word of cheer to the señorita. Mr. Tym, however, looked pretty sharply back, and without stopping set us a quicker pace and drew on to the turn of the first alley. I glanced down the street, seeing no cause for apprehension, and thence fetched a look out upon the dusky, yet starlit bay, and still conceived that our troubles were nigh over. This alley would take us by a quiet way to the water, whence it ought to be an easy matter to reach the jetty and so the boat.

We risked no talk, and when we had turned the corner Mr. Tym set us a still brisker pace. I assisted Doña Carmen, who proved, indeed, no mean walker, and we kept on to the termination of the alley. Here, as hitherto, it was dark, save for the stars, and was almost deathly quiet as well. But I think the buildings about were in the main small warehouses and mechanics' shops, such as would not be in use save by day, and again I suppose that such people as were here were in fear of their lives, and so lay dark and close.

For the reason that this quarter contained so little wealth we were in the smaller danger of meet-

ing straggling parties of our men, and indeed, Mr. Tym here ventured to relax the pace a little, the which I was heartily glad of for the señorita's sake. We might now have taken to the beach, had we so minded, as we had come out to the water, but on the whole we thought it best otherwise, and so fetched yet again to the right, this continuing till the land once more widened, when I noted with joy that we were close upon the jetty.

It seemed lighter here. The space about us was more open, and the clear stretch of water lay just before. The jetty appeared to be deserted (indeed, it was an old one, little used), and as far as could be seen not a person was in the neighbourhood. The stars made some show in fetching out the expanse of the bay, which gave a wider boundary seaward than one would have guessed, and on the left there was a quickening to more and brighter lights, where the ships and small craft lay. I could now give some attention to the wind, which I found was off the land, though as yet, it seemed, not confirmed, and in strength hardly more than a small stir. There was a moderate swell on, as I could tell by the slow rising and sinking of the ships, and the air was warm, with a kind of tropic smell and heaviness.

By this time we were all upon the jetty, Mr. Tym and the captain waiting a bit till my companion and I could come up.

"Tell the señorita she can take a long breath now," said Sellinger cheerily. "I will but fetch the sloop and it's good-bye to this hell-hole!"

"The captain thinks you can take courage now,"

I translated to the señorita. "He has but to fetch the boat and we are off."

"God and all the saints be thanked!" she said fervently.

"It will not be a long voyage," I explained. "We think to fetch Delasco, or at farthest Buenaventura. At least, be of good cheer, for all goes gloriously."

"*Yo espero,*" she said with a sweet smile.

The captain had now left us, and I suggested that my companion would do well to rest, which I found her a passable place to do by spreading her cloak upon the planks.

The next few minutes seemed long, for now we were about no active movement, and could think upon the passage of the time. I drew nigh the señorita, that I might hearten her by an occasional word, and Mr. Tym and Mac Ivrach fell to pacing up and down the jetty. About us all preserved the previous quiet, though otherwise, now that we were still, we noted the former alarms and cries. First it would be a clamour, as of men shouting, and again it would be a far-off shriek, or a dog would break out and bark long and vociferously. Once or twice passing boats turned our way, and once there was a flashing up of lights on a ship, by which I thought there certainly must be some alarm, but in the end nothing came of it, and all fell again quiet.

However, even this long suspense—if I can call that long which was, in truth, but a few minutes—came to an end. While yet I looked anxiously in the direction whence the captain was to be expected a gray, square outline broke out of the obscurity,

and immediately growing proved to be the welcome patched sail.

I uttered some exclamation of satisfaction, and Doña Carmen was quickly on her feet, crying, "Oh, the blessed boat!" and we hastened over.

Mr. Tym and Mac Ivrach were passing a word with the captain, and just as we came up the latter flung the fakes of a line ashore, which the Scotchman deftly caught.

All was now quickly managed. The tide had considerably declined, leaving the sloop low and awkward to get at, and the swell churned her up and down, but we passed the señorita safely aboard, and Mac Ivrach, who came last, tumbled in and shoved off. As the bow swung round the captain gave a pull at the sheet, and immediately the boom yerked out and the sail filled. We took a long dip and slide, and on looking back I had the satisfaction of perceiving a great gap open between us and the jetty. So much of the business, at least, was assured.

The captain now hauled in his sheet, saying that he would not pass too near the ships,* and we began to run to the west. We did, indeed, give the ships, as well as all the lesser craft, a wide berth, upon which Sellinger seemed satisfied, and, coming about, the sloop's nose pointed at last seaward.

By this time we had made a considerable distance into the bay, and the outlines of the shore had gradually sunk to an even duskiness and indistinct-

* It is doubtful if any ships were really taken at the time the city fell. The purposes of the story, however, require the introduction of a few.

ness. The various lights of the town, however, were still of some brightness, and particularly where the chief part was, and the ships were to be distinguished by the twinkling of their rising and falling lanthorns. Seaward I could make out no sail, and all broke unobstructed to what seemed (considering the comparative obscurity) a far boundary. On the west was the dark of a long point of land, and on the northeast a less certain shape, but which must mark, in fact, the forests that there came down to the shore.

All seemed to be going to our minds, and, having concluded these observations, I turned to have a word with the señorita. She sat in her former place, anxiously regarding the shore, but turned, brightening a bit, upon my speaking.

"All favours us," I said in a cheerful tone. "But a brief while longer and our safety is assured."

"*Gracias, señor*, you put me in heart," she answered with a little smile. She took off her great hat with a kind of feminine prettiness, as she spoke, and laid it beside her. I could make out her features better now, and their wonderful perfection struck me with the former sort of wonder.

She moved a bit toward me—as I might say in a confiding fashion—and went on:

"But, after all, señor, I should scarce dwell so much on my own good fortune. Think of my poor friends! Holy Mother, was not theirs a dreadful fate! They were slain—slain before my very eyes! But you knew it, señor?"

"Yes, lady," I said with a sigh, "I knew it."

"I can speak of it, and yet it seems to me I do

not get the thought into my mind," she went on. "It is as though I were hearing another relate it, or as though it might be no more than a dream."

"Such is the consequence of the suddenness of it, which is like a shock to the understanding," I answered. "Presently it will come clearer to you, and you will have the relief of tears. And now let me counsel you. Will you not lie down? It may be you can not sleep, but you will rest."

But at first she would not hear of it. She felt more content as she was, she said, and could in nowise think of sleep. Yet after a little—as I believe, mainly because I urged it—she yielded, and I went forward to prepare her lodging. This, indeed, meant no more than spreading down on the muddy floor a part of the cloaks and other garments we had brought on board and fastening up at the entrance a bit of canvas (which I had taken along at the last moment, thinking it might be useful) for a curtain.

Into this rude sort of cabin she crept, yet not without stopping at the entrance and (still on her knees) bidding us good-night. I will swear that she looked like some beautiful saint in this posture, and that despite her rude, unsuitable garb. When she had vanished I returned to my former place, and the rest of us fell into a little discourse.

The boat slipped along, and still we perceived nothing alarming—that is, no sign of pursuit. The lights behind us fell to little twinklings and finally to a mere streak of pale radiance, and the ocean with its vastness—long-heaving and glassy under the the stars—opened up. The breeze was still light, but constant, and set us sliding steadily on.

"I think," said Mr. Tym after a little, "that we may now venture to set the watches. We know not what strain may be put upon us, and we should rest while there is opportunity."

"True," said Sellinger. "Therefore do you three lie down, and I will take the first watch. I will call one of you at four bells."

This being settled, we three bestowed some cloaks for beds and lay down. Like the señorita, I had no thought of sleep, for I conceived that my nerves were too overwrought, but still I would make the trial. At the last I had glanced shoreward, but nothing seemed changed there. No sail was in sight, and only a faint yellowing appearance, like an unusual number of low-hanging stars, marked the city.

I lay a considerable time in my place, my eyes shut but my senses fully awake. I heard all the small noises—the run of the water past, the smothered churning of the leakage in the well, the clucking of the boom block as the captain trimmed his sheet, the gritting slide of one of Mac Ivrach's shoes, and while my thoughts seemed about to become more active, as my brain was withdrawn from outward matters, in reality I fell asleep.

CHAPTER XXVII.

OF OUR VOYAGE IN THE BOAT AND THE DANGER THAT FINALLY THREATENED US.

My rest was not profound, being vexed with harassing dreams, and soon I came to a vaguely con-

scious state—I mean to that state when I seemed to say to myself, "This is a dream"—and after that I awoke.

The boat was travelling on after the former sort. It was a bit darker around, for the stars appeared to have dimmed, wherefore I guessed that the moon was at hand, and the breeze seemed a thought stronger. Come to cast a glance aft, I perceived Mac Ivrach, the captain having turned over the helm to him, and this showed me that it was past two of the clock. I sat up, for just now I had no more desire to sleep, and when I had looked toward the cuddy and seen and heard nothing of the señorita I got to my feet and softly joined Mac Ivrach.

The captain had left his timepiece, for Mac Ivrach had none, and upon a whispered inquiry I learned that it was half after two. We did not venture to talk much, for fear of disturbing the others, but I improved the time to come at a more definite knowledge of our situation. We had run perhaps ten or twelve miles, this being chiefly to the south, and were now heading a little east of our first course. We were still far from clearing the bay (for that is a great piece of water, in southern extent, I think, near a hundred miles), but yet had the ocean broad before us, and that to a range of all the southerly points on the compass. As for the wind, which I have already spoken of, I found it to continue as before—that is, from the north.

In no great time the moon rose, and soon after I insisted on relieving Mac Ivrach, it being, indeed, before the end of his trick, but I was not sleepy and so could as well do it.

Nothing, I may say in brief, happened during my watch. In no long time the night sky paled and the first gray streaks of morning appeared. Mr. Tym and then the captain awoke, and a little later Mac Ivrach. Mr. Tym would have me lie down and he finish the watch, but I protested that it was not worth while. However, it was arranged that he was to take the first watch the coming night.

It was nigh seven of the clock before the señorita appeared. She had slept some, it seemed, though brokenly, and was many times awake. She looked a little worn, which was not surprising, seeing what she had been through, but was in moderately good spirits, and this was even better than I had feared, having in mind her state the night before. We made room for her aft, and Mac Ivrach threw off his coat and bestirred himself to prepare breakfast. This consisted of a slab of cold boiled beef, some rye bread, a roasted capon, and a little bag of grapes. For drink we had wine and a pannikin of hot spiced ale (very good and grateful to our stomachs), which Mac Ivrach cleverly prepared by unscrewing the top of a lanthorn, and so making a kind of furnace, over which he heated it.

The meal went very well, Doña Carmen alone eating sparingly, and at the close we men got out our pipes. The wind continued moderate and steady, and there was no sail in sight, so we might for a little take our ease. Doña Carmen showed no signs of seasickness, somewhat to my surprise, but I afterward learned that she had been a good deal upon the water, so was quite seasoned.

The morning continued to advance, and there

was no mentionable change in the situation. After a time Doña Carmen retired to her cabin (I suspected that the poor soul had now come to the full thought of her state and of her loss, for her countenance had greatly fallen), and the rest of us dropped into a listless sort of discourse. The sun got higher, beating down fiercely and making an almost intolerable glare upon the water, and in this wise it drew on to noon. At a little past eight bells we had dinner, and to this the señorita came, driven out, also, I think, by the heat, and looking dejected as well as weary. She ate scarce anything, and when I would have given her a word of cheer she made a motion to stay me, and her eyes filled with tears.

I perceived that I had best let her alone, trusting to time to mend her state, and so nodded kindly and turned away.

At last the long afternoon declined. The plain reds of the quick tropic sunset showed in the west, and the breeze dropped to a light stir. There was still nothing new in our surroundings, or nothing save what the falling into evening brought. The former swell still rose and sank, and beyond us undulated black and glittering out to sea, and from where it made a faint line on the horizon the cloudless evening sky grew bluer and arched over to its union with the sunset colours. At all points of the compass the seaboard was perfectly clear. No sail, not even a bird, and certainly no landfall.

We made the ordinary preparations for the night, and at eight of the clock Mr. Tym sat down to the tiller. Upon a little thought we had decided to have

no more than two watches, the first continuing to four bells and the other, or morning watch, to eight bells. By this plan the two who stood the watches would have each six hours below and the others the full night. On this occasion it was arranged that the captain was to succeed Mr. Tym.

Fortunately that night, like the other, passed without alarms. At daybreak we all narrowly scanned the horizon, but there was nothing to be seen, neither ship nor landfall. The captain now told us that we must have cleared the bay, and were therefore fairly at sea.

Toward noon the wind showed signs of failing, but as yet we managed to creep along. As the sun got higher I contrived a little tilt for the señorita, making it of cloaks, and this she thankfully slipped under, giving me a sweet "Gracias," which more than repaid me for my pains.

We had dinner, and about two of the clock I relieved Mac Ivrach at the helm. I did not think to fetch any scrutiny about, as I sat down, but the Scotchman, as he was stepping away, flung a glance to windward. At once I saw him stop and take a steadfast look.

"Is aught in sight?" I asked curiously and a bit apprehensively.

"Aye," he said with a little hesitation, "I wad be thinking, a sail."

I sprang up at that, getting the full range of his observation. Truly enough, low down in the north was a dim white speck.

I fetched a long, careful look, and was immediately of his mind. The shape, though small, was

clear cut and steadfast, and could be nothing else than the canvas of a ship.

Mr. Tym and the captain were forward in the shade of the sail, but now, either perceiving or hearing us, rose and took a look for themselves, and immediately came aft.

"You think it suspicious to raise a sail in that quarter?" I said to the captain. I spoke guardedly, fearing to alarm the señorita.

"Aye," he answered in the same key; "it is all odds that she comes from Panama."

"Is it as far wrong as that?" I exclaimed, starting. "I was suspicious of her direction, but no more. But, pray, are you quite persuaded of this? For instance, may she not hail from some port farther north?"

"I can not figure it so," said Sellinger, shaking his head. "We have but just cleared the bay, and this sail fetches fair out of it. There is no port in that quarter save Panama."

"And she is clearly too large for one of the little native fishermen," put in Mr. Tym.

He seemed to speak with his usual coolness, but with a face grave for him.

"It will no be lang before we shall be sure of her," said Mac Ivrac, who was looking hard at the speck. "We are raising her fast."

This was indeed evident, as I saw by another glance.

"Well, we can watch her for a bit, then," said Sellinger, but with no abatement of his soberness. "At least, we can be sure whether she is full on our course."

We let fall the talk, accordingly, and all stood up, with our eyes on the coming sail. Steadily but slowly, for the wind was still weak, it grew and whitened. In no long time we had raised the upper part of the fore course, and soon after the foot. Then crept up the dark, firm shape of the hull. It was clear now that her topsails and the fanlike studding sails were finding some upper current of air, and in a great way helping her on. Nearer still she crept, and soon we could separate the spritsails from those on the foremast, and resolve the general sort and shape of her forward spars. She seemed to be a small ship, say of a hundred and twenty or a hundred and thirty tons, and by her appearance was lightly loaded. Her hull was painted black, or at least very dark, and was pretty heavily sparred. There seemed to be a gun or two forward, for once or twice the sun caught a glistening object there, but we were still too far off to distinguish anything so small as human figures. There was no telling her nationality, for bows-on, as she was, no striking points or profiles were to be made out, and thus far she had displayed no flag.

"She is at least bound straight for us," said Sellinger at last. "Doubtless her fellows have a glass with which they have made us out. My suspicions are more and more confirmed."

"I think you are right," I said reluctantly, "and since—— But what is this?" I broke off abruptly. "By heavens!"

I cried out in this fashion because the mainsheet, which I had all the time held with a turn round my hand, of a sudden grew slack, and on looking back I

found the sail waving and falling into folds. In our close watch of the ship we had neglected the wind, which had first slowly declined and now was evidently on the point of failing altogether.

My companions instantly caught my meaning.

"Aye, that changes matters," said Sellinger with a kindling eye. "See, the ship begins to lag already."

"There is hope," said Mr. Tym calmly. "She will have to send a boat, and that, if we can not run away from, we can fight."

"I think we should do both," said Sellinger with one more look. "The ship we want to leave as far behind as we can, and the other will come when we are overtaken. Let us lower the sail and get out the sweeps."

He helped carry out his own suggestion, and the gaff was quickly down on the boom and he and Mac Ivrach seated at the oars.

"Starboard! We will lay for the coast," he called to me.

"Starboard it is, sir!" I cried heartily and almost cheerfully.

"Look again at the ship," said Mr. Tym, who was now standing just by me watching her. "My eyes are not quite what they were once, and the light is a bit unfavourable. Does she not begin to luff? Aye, her head rides round."

"She is about to send a boat," I exclaimed a moment after. "I can catch the tremble of it against the side."

"Ye be richt," said Mac Ivrach, whose eyes, like mine, were good. "A boat, and men in it; aye, and the flash o' arms and armour."

"Then," said Mr. Tym composedly, "we may as well consider all doubt settled. Yon ship is what we supposed."

Despite my resolution and late renewal of hope, I could not help a little sinking of the spirits at these words. The boat must, of course, catch us, and how could we hope to contend with her fierce and numerous crew?

"We will hold on steadily and yet without tiring ourselves," said the captain. "The farther we can draw those fellows from the ship the better, especially since the wind may by and by spring up."

This was clearly wise, and he went on to carry out his plan, the boat astern of course continuing to gain.

"Well," said Mr. Tym presently, "I take it that we have now reached the point where we should be considering some plan. I mean of the fighting. It will need to be done with a measure of precision, and the more from our small numbers."

This was said as coolly as though there could be no other thing but fighting, and the only question was the manner of it. But, indeed, this was not far from what any of us must conclude, for what fate was it that we could expect at the hands of these wretches? Moreover, there was the poor helpless señorita.

"Nay, do you go on and lay the plan," said Sellinger. "You are the better general. I take it we can have little hope of winning, the odds being what they are, so that it is but a question of making as much trouble for those villains as we can."

"Well," said Mr. Tym, with one of his collected

and intrepid smiles, "I confess that the prospect is not much better than you put it. What say you, Master Ardick? Have you any scheme to offer?"

"None," said I briefly and desperately. "Station me, and I will fight."

"And you, Mac Ivrach?" Mr. Tym proceeded.

"In the same boat wi' Maister Ardick, sir."

"We had best stop rowing," said Sellinger at this point. "In fact, I am a bit blown. Unship oars, Mac Ivrach, and prepare to put your breath to another purpose."

"It is time we armed," said Mr. Tym, rising. "Ardick, you will have to explain the matter to the señorita, which is a harsh duty, but may not be avoided. She must be cautioned as to lying low when the bullets begin to fly."

"It is almost worse than the fighting to tell her," I said with a sigh, "but, as you say, it must be done."

I stepped along to the cuddy accordingly, and in a tone which I made as commonplace as I could spoke her name.

She instantly answered and parted the curtain.

I pitied her so that I could not easily command my words, but after a moment managed to explain what had happened. She bore the news better than I had feared, though the colour very quickly left her cheeks.

"I will obey you, señor," she said as I finished. "I know that you and your companions are brave and will beat off those cruel men, if it be possible. You would have your weapons, and I will fetch them."

With this—to my surprise, for I had not thought her such a heroine—she brought the swords and pistols and handed them to me.

I praised her spirit, and she faintly smiled, lifting her dark eyes for a moment to mine. I helped her from the berth, and as my companions were waiting, and this was no time for sentiment, turned back to them with the weapons.

We fell to loading the pistols, and Doña Carmen, after a long look at the approaching boat, sat down quietly on one of the neighbouring thwarts.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

OF THE FIGHT WITH THE BOAT'S PEOPLE.

It was idle to deny the desperateness of our situation. A well-armed boat's crew to contend against, and we numbering only four, and of those but three well skilled in arms! To be sure, Mr. Tym was an astonishing fighter, and I understood the use of the sword better, perhaps, than any but two or three of Morgan's entire force, but yet this was only a circumscribed matter, and one quickly altered by a well-aimed pistol shot. Yet two advantages we did have, though both were small compared with the fearful odds. This was, first, the better target that the enemy must present as he drew nigh, and, secondly, the freer play we should have for our swords when it came to the final *mêlée*.

But desperate or otherwise, our defence was a resolved thing, and whatever our misgivings we

went with hardy coolness about it. Our plan, of necessity, was rather simple. We were to take our stations a little way apart, thus securing room for fighting, and were to withhold our fire till the enemy were close upon us, when we were to rise and deliver a volley. After that we were to proceed as circumstances and our judgment warranted. Luckily we were well provided with firearms, having brought away, besides our former weapons, not fewer than four large and three or four small pistols. These we had easily obtained from the great number of such weapons lying about, and had secured with them a bag of bullets and a little case of powder. This first business attended to, we proceeded to put on our cuirasses and headpieces (which we had hitherto discarded, owing to the heat), and tried our swords, to be sure they were easy in the scabbards. Mr. Tym likewise unscrewed the cap of his arm dagger.

All this we managed with the former sort of coolness, yet by littles ceasing to talk, as indeed was natural under so great a strain. The buccaneers' boat drew on apace, and at last began to cut a clear shape, as she rose on the swells and we got the measured flashes of her oars. It was now time that Doña Carmen should retire (for there was no telling how soon the opening bullet might fly), and I crossed over to her and told her so, she consenting, though with a long breath and a sad little clasping of the hands that seemed to me most pathetic. I said what I could to hearten her (God knows it was little, and that, with the best resolution I could muster, but hollowly spoken), and returned to my former

place, my spirits lower, I think, than at any time since the buccaneer had hove in sight. There were still a few last things to be done, such as to make a bunt of the sail, and run the boom up out of the way, and to lay the oars along forward, and these, with no more than a word or two, we did.

By this time the coming boat was almost within pistol shot, and, bows-on though she was, we could make out something of her size and the number of her crew. She seemed to be an ordinary ship's long-boat, nigh as big as the sloop, and by such a view as we got, when she fetched her downward tilt, contained not fewer than fourteen or fifteen men. Some of these were in armour, as we saw by a broad gleam here and there, but the greater number wore no defensive gear, though now and then there might be a simple headpiece or patch of breast harness.

We were now keeping entire silence, and the sloop rocked as idly on the swell as though she held only corpses. Mr. Tym made a sign to us, and still without a word we slipped quietly to our stations. I think scarce any moment in my life comes back to me more clearly than this—I mean as I took my place, which was amidships, and prepared to await the drawing near of the boat. All the features of the surroundings, the slow, glassy uplift of the swells, undulating off to what seemed an evenness on the sea-line, the nearly cloudless sky, the gently dipping sail of the becalmed ship, even the trifling things about me, the clumsy cage anchor, with the white dried mud on its bars, a bruised place in the sheathing planks at my feet—all seemed to come out with a strange minuteness at that moment.

But yet this was only, as it might be, with the passing of a breath. It was but a prank of the mind, laying hold, as I suppose, in a kind of startled or quickened apprehension upon all things that the eye at the moment caught, and vanished as I cast the next look astern.

There the coming boat was clearer than ever to be made out, its double row of oars steadily flashing and falling.

It continued to grow, and shortly I could resolve the figures of the men, and could perceive a quicker play of light on their arms and harnesses, which I took to mean that they were making some stir of preparation. A bit nearer, and the fellows in the bow began to screw their heads about and look over their shoulders, and as the stern uptilted on a swell I perceived one man rise and fetch a long stare at us. They were yet too far off and the boat too unsteady to be sure of faces, but I took this person to be Towland.

I glanced at Mr. Tym, wondering whether he was for giving some challenge or hail, but it seemed not, or else he would be waiting a little longer, for he made no sign.

The man that I had taken to be Towland now sat down, but with the strokes that immediately followed the boat had drawn some fathoms nearer, and with that, as it seemed of a sudden, the different faces on board came out. The man in the stern sheets was indeed Towland, and besides him I perceived Captain Blyte, Paul Cradde and several of the different gangs.

There was now no time to lose if we would in

any sort parley, for they were almost upon us. Indeed, I had already looked for some opening shot, which perhaps only a fear of harming the Lady Carmen had deterred them from giving. Nevertheless Mr. Tym continued as before, each hand holding a pistol, and his air unmoved.

Of a sudden the bow of the approaching boat began to swing. As the long side gradually opened up the oars were lifted and hung dripping, and the heavy craft forged sluggishly down upon our quarter. Towland bent forward then, and in his harsh voice shouted:

"Sloop ahoy!"

Whereupon Mr. Tym rose quietly to his feet.

"'Board the boat!"

"Do you surrender?"

"What will you do with us if we comply?"

"We will carry you back, and Morgan shall judge you."

"And what," pursued Mr. Tym calmly, "will you do with the lady?"

Towland appeared to hesitate. "She shall not need to complain," he said at last. "If you will know, Captain Blyte and I mean jointly to care for her."

"A very pretty plan," rejoined Mr. Tym, and he almost smiled. "Nevertheless I fear it will not do. It may be the lady is something over particular."

Towland stood like a great iron statue for a moment, as though hardly able to credit this audacious answer. Then he turned and made a swift sign. Instantly the fellows at the oars let fall and gave way.

"Now!" cried Mr. Tym, whirling upon us. "Up and fire!"

Promptly enough we responded. As Towland gave his sign we thrust forward our weapons, steadied them while one's pulse might give a single beat, and fired.

"Down!" shouted Mr. Tym again.

We all dropped, and no sooner so than five or six pistols banged in response, and at least one ball buried itself with a spiteful *chug* in the boat.

We scrambled up, drawing our swords and remaining pistols, and as the smoke lifted were able to see what we had done.

Both bow oarsmen were gone and in a little space amidships, piled up in a shining kind of bundle, was one of the fellows in armour. All passed, as it were, at a glimpse, for the smoke was hardly up and we ready in our places before the other fellows at the oars gave a few furious tugs, and their bow came churning up to our quarter.

We stood fast with our last pistols, and as the oars rattled in and the boat's nose forged past, we fetched swiftly to bear and let go.

Some one shouted, and I thought there was a crash, as though at least one fellow had gone down, but before the smoke had fully cleared their bow ground along our side and the boat's length of them balanced themselves for the spring aboard.

From here I lose nigh all but my own personal part of the business. I know that the nearest fellow came first to Mr. Tym, and received a swift understroke that whipped the whole side of his neck open, and thereupon fell backward, and I believe also

that the next man made a fierce but ill-judged thrust at the captain, but beyond this I have no clear thought of the general doing.

As for my own personal faring, the first that seemed to happen was that a red-faced man came suddenly before me, and that he clapped his foot on the gunwale of his boat and made a fierce slash at me.

I met the blow with a strong guard, and thereupon, very swiftly stooping, I gave a darting kind of thrust, upon which my weapon was checked somewhere in him and he dropped out of sight. Then a blow—luckily not heavy—lighted on my headpiece, and the flash and smoke of a pistol shot half blinded me, and the next that comes clear is that I was struggling to free my arm from some one's grasp, and that I felt a hard knock on my breastpiece, as though a sword or dagger point had struck there.

I made a full recovery of my senses with that. It was the negro Gabriel who was gripping my sword arm, and he it was who had dealt me the blow (doubtless aimed at another spot) that I had taken so luckily on my cuirass. No one else seemed to be striving with me, and indeed the negro himself was between me and most of the others, he having forced me, it seemed, back toward the rail. There was no time for aught but desperate action. My left side was swung away, and in my left hand was still my dagger. I had not forgotten a certain trick, learned alongshore, and, without in the least struggling to free my arm, I set my feet suddenly, fetching us both to a standstill, and before he could in the least guess my purpose I let fly a low but powerful kick.

I can not say whether the shin-bones of a negro are of the tenderness that is said, but I do know that Gabriel gave an agonized yell, and instantly released my arm. His hand was already lifted, with his knife in it, but that business went with the pain, and he let go the weapon and ran ducking backward, cradling the leg in his locked fingers. I stayed not to give him time to recover. My sword now free, I made a quick dash and let go a vengeful thrust. The point took him fair in the midst of his broad breast, and he gave a kind of bellow and thrashed instantly forward and to the deck. So quick and peculiar was his fall that I had no time to withdraw my blade, and it snapped short off close by the hilt. Considerably dismayed, for it was a poor time to be disarmed, I let fall the useless hilt and jumped backward. I had scarce alighted when something gave a hard bump and rolled to my feet, and thereupon uncurling—I can describe the motion no otherwise—I perceived it to be the maimed and bloody figure of Towland. He was no more than before me when there came a surge of tangled fighters, both Mr. Tym and the captain in the midst, and like a straw before their impact, I was flung staggering back, whereupon, bringing up at the rail, I could not, despite a desperate scramble, save myself, and went over backward and into the water!

CHAPTER XXIX.

OF THE END OF OUR DESPERATE FIGHT.

NOTWITHSTANDING the headlong manner of my falling and my heavy cuirass, I came pretty quickly to the surface. I was too good a swimmer to be easily put about by such a mishap, and therefore swallowed no water except at first, and made the strokes that returned me to the surface with measurable composure. The sloop had already drifted three or four fathoms away, and I could therefore get the range of her deck, which I did in a kind of desperation, little doubting that I should behold the worst.

To my passing great amazement, while Sellinger and Mac Ivrach had disappeared, Mr. Tym still maintained the struggle. He had fought his way to the forward deck, and brought to bay there was steadily holding off the whole crowding pack!

Yet a moment of this, for of course it could not last. Paul Cradde and Blyte made a furious rush. Blyte went down under a lightninglike thrust, but Cradde seized Mr. Tym round the waist and flung him heavily to the deck. The other wretches gave a yell and began to swarm up, and with that—forgetting even my own desperate case—I cried out and closed my eyes.

I opened them again when there was a great shout, followed by a hard banging of steel, and on staring that way I saw the uprisen and bloody figure of Captain Sellinger, his sword in his hand, and three

of the buccaneers in full retreat before him. I looked hastily to see what had become of Mr. Tym, but to my surprise he was still lying where Cradde had flung him, Cradde himself being nowhere to be seen. It was all barely before my eyes when the three buccaneers, as though recovered from their panic, and ashamed of flying before one man, fetched to a halt, and with a few heavy cuts and thrusts forced the captain to a stand. I tried to rally my wits, for it was surely time I was taking my part in this business, and, with a few paddling strokes, striving to come to the strength and naturalness of my limbs, I let [illegible] toward the sloop. I had little fear of being shot at by the three buccaneers, even if they noticed me, for, as they were using only their swords against the captain, it was clear they had no loaded firearms, and, besides, the volleys of the entire company had all along been light, as though none but the leaders had been provided with pistols. This, indeed, I had already guessed the cause of, Towland and Blyte fearing for the safety of Doña Carmen.

I pushed on boldly, then, only fearing lest the captain should not hold out, and gradually drew toward the dipping stern of the sloop. She had drifted some little distance away in the time that I had been in the water, and, with my heavy armour and wet clothing, I could make but slow progress, so that it was some seconds before I was finally close. In that time the captain saw me, as did the buccaneers, and while the former gave a joyous shout and waved his sword, the three men swore and looked irresolutely at one another.

"Fling me the slack of the sheet," I called out,

as I came under the stern. I perceived there was no time to waste.

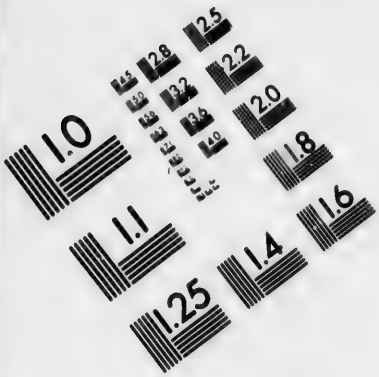
Here was a moment of anxiety, for now the sight of the deck was entirely cut off, but after an instant the end of the sheet came snaking over and dropped by my side. I caught it eagerly and gave a strong pull, which showed that it was fast, and began to draw myself up.

Now, indeed, I was hard put to it, for not only was I on the rack mentally, but the physical strain of lifting my wet and armoured body from the water was almost more than my weakened muscles would stand. Once I was on the verge of slipping back, but, with a desperate and almost savage struggle, I thrashed my leg around the line and got a turn which stayed me. Again up I crawled, and at last I could reach an arm over the rail. Now I thought I heard a step along the deck, and quickly following this there was a loud splash, and with that the boat leaped and rocked. I hung fast and stared anxiously up, and thereupon, to my infinite relief, Captain Sellinger looked down upon me.

"Give me a hand," I panted, for now my overtasked strength was going, and I sank to the length of my arm.

"Aye, aye!" he cried heartily, and with that he clapped down and locked his fingers about my wrist. Mustering the remnants of my strength, I made a supreme effort, and with one able flounder tumbled over the rail and fell into the sternsheets.

"Good!" exclaimed a composed and familiar voice. "I was coming to bear a hand, but a weeping from this inconvenient cut got into my eyes and



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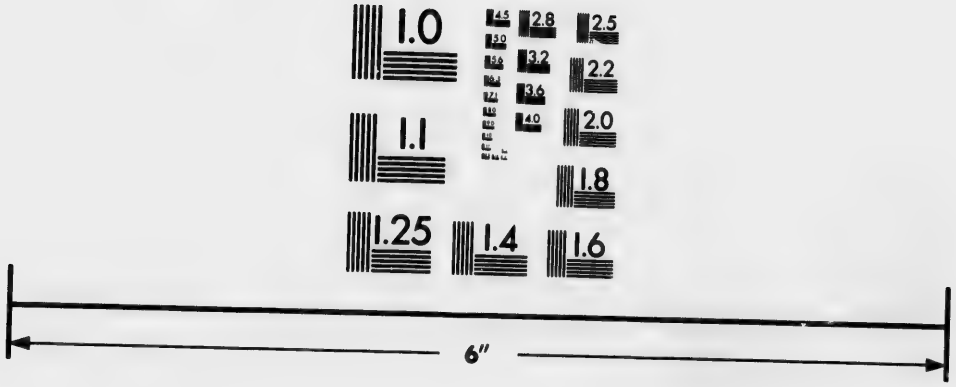

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hindered me. I believe that settles all, and quite to our minds!"

"Thank God!" I righted myself and burst out. "Is it indeed you, Mr. Tym, and has everything gone so gloriously?"

I got to face him with the words, and though still dizzy and weak, was able to determine the whole excellent matter for myself.

It was quite as he said. The last buccaneer in arms had disappeared, and above the prone bodies the señorita was looking from the cuddy, and Mac Ivrach was just by, getting the steadiness of his legs. The only hurt that showed upon him was an inconsiderable bruise near the top of his forehead.

Turning back, then, to Captain Sellinger, who had previously seemed so severely dealt with, I was delighted to find that he showed no more than two or three superficial wounds. The greatest was a cut down one side of his head, which had made considerable blood run and given him his first shocking appearance. I noted, however, that his steel breastpiece was severely battered, as though it had pretty certainly protected him from more sinister attempts, and his pot-helmet, which lay on the deck, was split in twain at the crest.

I finished my inspection with Mr. Tym, but now with less anxiety, for I had seen in the first hasty glance that he had been but lightly dealt with. A cut across the forehead, which had caused the dripping of blood he had mentioned, but which was manifestly not deep, seemed the extent of his hurts. As soon as might be I meant to ask him how he had managed his deliverance, and in what fashion he had

turned the tables on Cradde, but just now a still more pressing question remained to be answered. This was, of course, what had become of the rest of the buccaneers, and how far it was certain we were done with them. It will be understood that the determination of my companion's injuries required but a moment, and, in fact, took no longer than while I was getting the steadiness of my head after tumbling into the boat. I now found some strength in my legs, and with a lurch managed to gain my feet, looking eagerly over the rail as I did so, and was at once satisfied, yet almost confounded with what I saw. The buccaneers' boat had floated some way off, and not a soul was in it, though in the water were three swimmers making languidly toward it. Some fathoms out, in the direction of the becalmed ship, was a dark object—probably a corpse—and an oar and a man's hat floated near, but otherwise the neighbourhood was vacant.

It was so sharp and absolute a change that for a moment I could scarce make it clear in my mind, and stood staring over the rail. But presently my companions began to speak, and this brought me back to my balance, and I turned again to them. The señorita was coming out of the cuddy, and I clambered over the bodies to her and drew her to a little open space where she could stand.

She was woefully pale, yet seemed in a brave way to control herself, though she broke down for a bit as I steadyingly pressed her hand.

"Praise God, all is over, dear lady," I said. "Yonder are the miserable relics of the foe. It is a time such as I never thought to see and live, but is

in the most blessed manner ended. Very quickly we shall ship the oars and be on our way."

"Your words seem like an angel's, señor," she said, trying to command her voice. "After all that has happened, I can scarce think or reason. Ah, but it was horrible! The cries and the blows, the scraping of dying men's feet, and the jarring of the falling bodies! And above all was the suspense! Oh, that suspense, señor, and in especial at the last! But I must not think of it, only to thank you—you and your brave companions. You are such heroes as I believe are not elsewhere in the world!"

"Nay, señorita, you praise us beyond our merits," I answered deprecatingly. (In truth, I felt a thrill of pleasure at her words.) "We did, I grant, make a pretty sturdy fight, but beyond that there is no call for praise. Having undertaken your defence at first, we could not afterward[illegible]ve as very poltroons, abandon you, and in our own behalf we did but prefer the sword or bullets to torture."

But she would not have it so, and insisted that we had first risked all in delivering her from the castle, and that this was a piece of heroism to match it, adding (to my surprise) that she knew we had refused to deliver her to Towland. "I peeped from the cuddy and saw," she explained. "Yes, señor, it was easy to understand, even though I did not know a word that was said."

"Well, then, you may make a hero of Mr. Tym," I answered more lightly, "and, indeed, I am free to say he deserves it. The rest of us did but obey his commands."

I think our dialogue might have gone on a mo-

ment or two longer, for I was quite satisfied to fare so poorly in the argument, when I saw that my companions had begun to take steps toward clearing the boat, beginning with drawing aside the bodies, and I hastily broke off and joined them.

By this time the three swimmers had reached their boat, and were now pulling sluggishly toward the ship, she hanging calm-bound as before.

I first gave a glance about the horizon, looking both for a sail and any coming of wind, but perceived neither, and without further delay fell to work.

I should remark here that we might be supposed to have some fears lest the buccaneer should send another boat, and this was at first true, but now we had pretty well decided that she had despatched the sole one she had, a thing the more credible as she must have sailed at exceeding short notice.

We stood on no ceremony in disposing of the bodies, the captain merely stopping to strip one of a helmet to take the place of his own broken one, which don , we tumbled the remains hastily over the rail. A few buckets of water were then drawn and dashed over the deck, and the disagreeable business was ended. We had already determined to run the sloop for the coast, for if the wind did not spring up, favouring the ship, or if it did and she did not choose to pursue, we could then fetch out; but if she should follow we could hope to beat her to the coast.

Mr. Tym and the captain had already tied up their wounds, Mac Ivrach's needing no attention, and when the boat was ready the Scotchman and I sat down to the oars. We were in no case for hard

work, but desired to be making a start, it being uncertain, indeed, how long this favouring calm would hold.

CHAPTER XXX.

OF THE STRANGE AND EXCELLENT MENDING OF OUR FORTUNES.

THOUGH we were so near the surface of the water, and therefore commanded no great range of distance, it seemed a long time that we were dropping the buccaneer. But at last we sank his hull and then his lower sails, and finally the topgallants dwarfed to an insignificant speck on the sea line. The day was by this time nearly spent, and the even reds of the tropic sunset began to flush the west. A fair-weather paleness of blue appeared above these colours, and the sky coming down to it darkened without clouds, presaging stars and calm as on the previous nights.

We were near enough now, as I thought, to make out the coast, and I asked Mac Ivrach to give over rowing while I took an observation. I proved to be right, for distinct on the eastern boundary was a dark, well-marked line.

By this time the Scotchman and I were pretty weary—he, indeed, hardly able to wag the heavy oar—and I proposed a short rest. Mr. Tym and the captain offered to spell us, but I objected—I was specially mindful of Mr. Tym's infirmity and of his present state, which must make the task too great,—and in the end the sloop was suffered to drift.

My companions now had an opportunity to see to their wounds, and it was found that Mr. Tym's long cut and the gash over the captain's ear needed a few stitches. Luckily Mac Ivrach had a housewife, and though it was now nearly dark I got out thread and needle and managed to do a rough job of surgery.

This ended, we concluded to have supper, there being no immediate danger and we standing in need of refreshment after what we had been through.

Mac Ivrach accordingly got out the provisions and opened a bottle of wine, and we fell to, our appetites not seemingly much affected by our trying experience. While we were eating I desired Mr. Tym to tell me how he had escaped from Cradde; likewise what had given the buccaneers their final fright, causing them to quit the boat.

"A very short story," he answered. "It might almost be summed up by saying that our friend Cradde was careless. You see, he flung me to the deck and drew his knife, having dropped his sword as he closed, and bent over me to end my troubles. I, as it chanced, had cleared my arm dagger, and when he thoughtlessly stooped over I reached up and did that for him he had intended to do for me. Then one of the other fellows made toward me, and just at the moment the captain rose and charged them in the rear. The man about to fall upon me pulled up, and I fetched a scramble and gained my feet. With that the three fellows lost heart and jumped overboard. That is the whole bigness of the matter, except that I have forgotten to say that Paul Cradde showed further his inconsiderateness by

fetching such a jump, as I prodded him, that he fell overboard. I can not be certain, therefore, whether I killed him or he drowned."

"Well, and certainly it was a great escape," I said with a long breath. "Aye, and very like for us all, for had you not despatched Cradde there is no saying what would have happened. I fear Mac Ivrach and I would have appeared too late on the scene, and the captain was dangerously overmatched."

"True and I was," admitted Sellinger, "though I showed as bold and fierce a front as I could."

We discussed the matter a little further, and all were of a mind that we came almost miraculously off. Indeed, but for such wonderfully favouring circumstances as the buccaneers' weakness in firearms and the too great crowding of their boat—causing them to hamper one another at the last and making them good targets—we should almost certainly have come by the worse.

This discourse over, we turned to the more important matter of the present situation. After a little we concluded to keep on for a while with the oars. We would head south, taking care to fetch nearer rather than farther from the coast, and by this course would constantly better our case, whether the calm held or no.

This decided on, and the captain and I having shipped the oars, we got our clumsy little vessel once more in motion. We pulled on steadily, the calm still holding, and continued, I should say, for above two hours. The captain then thought we might in safety give over, and we did so, having

covered better than four miles. I then persuaded the señorita to go to her cabin, promising to call her if there were an alarm, which done, we arranged the watches, and all but Mr. Tym, who had the first, turned in.

The night passed quietly. About sunrise a little breeze brought a wrinkle on the water, and we ran up our sail. By six of the clock we had way enough on the boat to exceed our speed with the oars, and with this we were very well satisfied. We drove along lightly that day, getting a little more wind in the afternoon, still from the right quarter, and by nightfall reckoned that we had made some five-and-thirty miles. We continued to keep the coast in sight, though now at a greater distance, as the danger from the buccaneer decreased. Matters being thus so quiet, I thought it a favourable time to have a little talk with the señorita, some things in which she was concerned standing to be settled, especially her future plans. I went forward, therefore, to where she sat.

"Well, señorita," I began, "we are so far out of our strait, and all goes very blithely. I opine that we shall have no more cause for worriment, and it might be well to take a little thought upon future matters. Have you yet any plans made, as where you mean eventually to go or whom you wish to communicate with? In especial, have you friends in this part of the country?"

"Alas!" she said sadly, "now that my poor uncle and aunt are gone, but one person remains that can have any interest in me. He is another uncle—my mother's brother—who lives in Havana, in the West

Indies. I do not know, indeed, if he be still alive, for he had planned to come this season to visit us, yet for a considerable time we have not heard from him."

"That," said I, "is a matter we can compass. You shall presently write him a letter, and I will see that he receives it. Aye, and I may be going to Havana myself. I was bound there when the mutiny occurred and our ship was lost, and it is as like a port for me now as any."

"You keep me always in your debt," she said with a grateful look. "Well, I will write it, and we will see in what manner it may be sent."

"Then one thing more," said I, "and I trust you will pardon me for speaking of it. You have no money, and it is an ill thing to be left among strangers with an empty purse. Have you those at Buenaventura or elsewhere who will supply your present needs?"

She smilingly shook her head.

"Nay, señor, I know no one at those places. Yet let not that give you concern, for all will go safely and well with me. No home will be closed against me when I shall have told my story."

"But I would not have you reduced to that strait," I said rather hastily. "That is, it is a pity that one in your station should come to it. We three friends have a little money, and out of it you shall take enough to answer your present wants. So much we shall insist upon."

"Certainly we shall not quarrel about that," she said with a smile, the water nevertheless starting to her eyes. "I perceive there is no way but that you must do the utmost for me."

"Pray take no thought of it," I said hastily. "We are Christians and Englishmen, and that should be enough to warrant what we may do in this affair. But now will you give me the name of your uncle? Possibly the captain may be acquainted with him."

"His name is Jeremiah Hope," she answered, "and since he is a man of affairs and somewhat interested in shipping, it is not unlike that Captain Sellinger may know him."

"Jeremiah Hope?" I cried in surprise. "Why, that is an English name. Is it possible that your mother was English?"

"By blood, yes," she answered, smiling. "But Spanish, or rather Cuban, otherwise, for she was born and reared in Havana."

"Now I call this a bit of news," I said with lively interest. "So you are the same as my country-woman? This, to be sure, accounts for the colour of your hair, which I have all along thought rather extraordinary for a Spaniard. But Jeremiah Hope? I suppose I must be wrong, yet—nay, I think I have heard the name. Let us see what the captain has to say. Captain Sellinger," I called to him, "have you an acquaintance with one Jeremiah Hope? He lives in Havana."

"Why," was the answer, the captain looking up in a little surprise, "no acquaintance, but he is the person to whom I am carrying the letter. I mean Captain Torrycorn's letter."

It was instantly clear to me. Of course I had heard the name, and it was a wonder I had not recognised it before. I hastened to explain why I

had asked the question, and added what the señorita had previously told me.

Naturally my companions were as greatly surprised as I, and we all agreed that we had seldom heard of a more singular circumstance.

"Then," said Sellinger, as we concluded, "it may come to it, that we shall carry Mr. Hope his niece as well as his letter, for otherwise it would be much the same as cutting her adrift."

"To which I say amen," said I very heartily. At other times I had been wont to let Mr. Tym speak first, but now I did not wait.

Both Mr. Tym and Mac Ivrach, as might be expected, were prompt to agree with us.

"This being our decision," said I, greatly pleased, "I will make it known to the señorita. She can not fail to be relieved by it."

I returned to her with the news accordingly, and had the great satisfaction of finding her as rejoiced and heartened as I had anticipated. Indeed, she was deeply moved and grateful, and in her touching manner of saying so fairly brought the tears to my eyes.

This matter, then, being so well settled, we addressed ourselves anew to the business of continuing the voyage. We had decided, as I should say here, to run first for Buenaventura, which Sellinger thought was not much above a hundred leagues distant. From there, should need require, we could make a further voyage in the boat, but we hoped to light upon some way of continuing in a larger craft. Once in one of the important southern ports and we could not fail to find a ship sailing to the Atlantic side of the continent.

The next day and the next passed without incident, and we continued to work slowly but steadily south. The third day something rather important happened, for the wind, which had hitherto so greatly favoured us, quite abruptly changed. It was now almost dead from the southwest, and at once reduced our speed at least three parts. In fact, with our shoal keel and high bow we could make no more than a knot an hour. This was rather discouraging, but the captain said it was to be anticipated, for we had now come to the region where there were prevailing southwesterly and southerly winds, and these, we should find, continued to the equator. This was more philosophical than comforting, but we could do no otherwise than make the best of it, and so the noon of the third day drew on. I was at the helm, which I had recently taken, and was shaking out a kink in the mainsheet, when, happening to glance to windward, I saw that which instantly suspended my operation and brought me with a leap to my feet. Low down on the water line, but perfectly distinct, was the white, unmistakable canvas of a ship.

I did not wait for a second look, but bawled out, as though I had been at the masthead, "Sail ho!"

They all sprang up, like so many puppets in a show.

"Where away?" cried the captain and Mac Ivrach together.

Mr. Tym, who was on the other side of the boom, scrambled under, and we all stood in a group.

"Yonder," I said, pointing at the speck. "Thank God, she is not from the direction of Panama!"

"No, she can not be a buccaneer, coming from that quarter," said the captain, with a breath of relief.

"The next thing is to determine her course," said Mr. Tym. "Would we had a glass!"

"We maun mak' it up in patience," observed Mac Ivrach, "whilk is no a satisfactory substitute."

We agreed with him, and sat down to wait for the unresolvable speck to grow.

Very slowly, as it seemed to our impatience, it swelled and whitened. At last we got the square of the upper sails, and could be sure she was bound our way. She was coming down exactly before the wind.

A few minutes more and we had lifted the fore course, and then slowly raised the shieldlike figure of the hull. As our post of observation was so low above the water this brought her comparatively near, and we could tell something of her size and general features. She was a large ship, with the tall bows of a craft of southern Europe, say of Spain or Italy, and was displaying no flag or other ensign.

"I suppose," said Mr. Tim, speaking with that composure which scarce ever forsook him, "that we are of one mind what we should do. Our case, though not a desperate one, is undesirable, and it would be better to try to mend it by boarding this ship—that is, if she will receive us."

We looked at one another, but there was no contrary opinion.

"Then," went on Mr. Tym, "say you put down your helm, Ardick, and we lay our course to cut her off."

"Very well," said I, and I accordingly tacked and fetched the sloop as near as she would come to the wind.

The ship was now so near that we could begin to make out human figures, and also get an idea of her size and rig. She was of eight hundred to a thousand tons burthen, well sparred, in neat trim aloft, and seemed freshly painted.

We now thought it time to signal, and the captain tore off the señorita's canvas curtain and affixed it to the end of an oar. I also fetched out my pistols and successively let them off. I was determined that no lack of seasonable notice, if she were indifferent about taking us, should stand as an excuse.

"She sees us! She is about to back her topsail," cried Sellinger.

This joyful news proved true. It needed only a single pull at the sheet and a thrust of the tiller, and we picked up our former headway and raced for her long side.

"She's West Indies built," Sellinger commented for the last time. "Aye, twig the black wood in her lower spars and the straight lines of her poop! But what is her name? She seems to have a kind of gilt flying fish for a figurehead."

"It maun be an angel—the figurehead," answered Mac Ivrach, "though wi' some reefing o' the petticoat, or whatever, and her name is the Sanchica."

I was hauling in sheet and the sloop was swinging off the ship's bow before much more could be said.

A short, black-bearded man, in a rough jacket

and long boots, swung himself up to the fore-shroud and hailed us. Truly enough, the words were Spanish.

"Sloop ahoy!"

"'Board the ship!" I bellowed back. "We are in distress!"

He took a short look before he answered again.

"You may board. Drop aft and stand by for a line."

"There is a woman with us!" I shouted once more. "Will you not take her in at the chains?" He made a gesture as though of surprise.

"Aye. Lay up to the main chains."

I gave the sloop the trifling way she required, and luffed again just off the midships bulwark. This was now lined with heads.

Some men came running that way, the officer's voice sharply directing them, and at once the fakes of a line shot out and fell across our fore deck. Mac Ivrach was there to receive it, and with a good turn we were at last connected with the ship. Another line followed, and two sailors dropped into the chains to handle it. I hurriedly explained to Doña Carmen what the design was, and secured her in the loop of it. We had only to wait for a favourable moment and the men safely drew her up. Mr. Tym, Captain Sellinger, and Mac Ivrach followed, and I made a bundle of our effects and came last. It was with a feeling of profound relief and thankfulness that I finally swung over the bulwark and dropped upon the deck.

There were as many as threescore people standing about. Other than the sailors there were six

or eight men and as many women that were very well dressed, and nearly all that were talking seemed to be employing good Castilian. Not many were of the swarthy type of Spaniard.

As I jumped off the rail the captain shouted to his first officer to fill away, and then turning to me asked in a brusque but not harsh tone what it was that had happened to us, and what we were doing in these parts.

"Those questions and others I will gladly answer," I said, touching my hat, "but first I beg that you will care for this lady, who is not alone fatigued, but stands otherwise in need of your hospitality."

He looked at me, as though not expecting such a precise and perhaps well-chosen answer, but after a moment answered civilly:

"Very well, señor, that is not unreasonable. I will see what may be done."

He turned to the ring of eager and curious women and said, with a rough sort of salute:

"You have heard the señor, ladies. Are there those among you who will take the señorita and care for her?"

"*Sí, sí,*" cried a dozen generous voices together.

With which they pressed forward and with southern warm-heartedness flung their arms about Doña Carmen, and almost carried her away.

"And now, señor, we will overhaul you a bit," resumed the captain. "But first, as to your boat. Is she worth preserving? If she is no better than she looks, I care not to tow her very far."

"First bear with me till I have asked a question," I answered. "Whither are you bound?"

"For Panama," he replied, a trifle impatiently.

"Alas, señor," I said sadly, "you will scarce go there; Panama is in the hands of the buccaneers!"

"*Diablo!* what say you?" he cried, starting. "In the hands of the buccaneers—of the English *piratos?* Nay, it can not be! *Madre de Dios!*"

Those standing about caught the words and a great stir followed. Several pressed forward, and without further regarding the captain began to ask eager questions, and some furiously swore. In the midst of the hubbub a stout, sturdy, gray-haired man, with a fresh complexion and very well dressed, pushed his way to the front.

"Are you English?" he said in a blunt, authoritative fashion. To my surprise he spoke in that language.

"I am," I hastily answered. "Thank God that you seem to be, also!"

"And this thing that you were telling?" he went on, ignoring my exclamation. "Is it true that Panama is in the hands of the buccaneers?"

"It is, sir," I said, more restrainedly. "The city is taken and sacked."

He drew a long breath.

"You are little like to know the matter I would ask," he resumed, "but I will put the question. Did you hear any mention of one Doña Carmen Gonzales? She lived in Taboga."

My amaze at this question may be imagined.

As soon as I could put my tongue to the words I cried:

"Heard? Why, sir, she is at this very moment in your cabin! Indeed, and I do believe you must be Mr. Jeremiah Hope!"

"In the cabin?" he only exclaimed, as in wonderment. "And is your companion who went below she? Nay, but this almost passes belief! What, that poor tattered creature, and in man's attire! My God, what must she not have suffered!"

"Yet she is well, sir," I said eagerly, "and has come out of that hell without scathe. But you must, indeed, be her uncle."

"I am Jeremiah Hope," he said, with another long breath, though now with a changed air. "I will go down at once," he went on. "But stay, I am exceeding grateful to you and your companions. I will say more of this anon. I am the owner of this ship, and am glad that it is in my power to do something for your present comfort.—Captain Telatrava," he went on in Spanish, and speaking again authoritatively, "I desire that you have these señores below and do all that may be done for their welfare. Shortly I will return and we will confer about the course of the ship."

He gave us a kindly nod and made for the companion, and in much wonderment and not a little jumbled in my thoughts I turned and prepared to follow the Spanish captain.

CHAPTER XXXI.

OF TWO IMPORTANT INTERVIEWS.

THE main cabin proved to be rather a small place, as most of the range athwartwise was taken up by sleeping berths, but all was well fitted and substantial. There were only a few passengers in sight, and those, by their pallor, recovering from seasickness; but a little way aft one cabin door was ajar, and from within came a lively sound of voices; wherefore I might guess where Mr. Hope and Doña Carmen were.

Captain Telatrava led us to two small cabins on the starboard side, and told us that they were at the service of Mr. Tym, Captain Sellinger, and me, and that he would give Mac Ivrach a comfortable berth 'tween-decks. He could do no better, he explained, in the rather crowded state of the ship.

We were only too glad to fare so well, and told him so, and, indeed, the cabins looked wonderfully inviting after the quarters we had quitted. They were commodious and clean, and each was provided with two comfortable bunks. Mac Ivrach was well content with the berth promised him, and in fact told us afterward that he had no reason to complain of any treatment that he received while on the ship. Captain Telatrava and Mac Ivrach being gone, we overhauled the cabins, and Mr. Tym and I took one—the larger—and Captain Sellinger the other.

Captain Telatrava appeared to have bestirred himself, and the passengers must have been gener-

ous, for the steward soon knocked and deposited a great pile of clothing, from which we very pleasedly proceeded to make a selection. In my own case the array was a little incongruous, for the coat was of black ferrandine, the waistcoat of blue velvet, and the breeches of a sort of yellow nankeen, but nevertheless I was very well satisfied. The fit was not bad, and when I had added a good Holland neckcloth and drawn on some brown hose and a pair of rather loose shoes, I thought I was very far from being unpresentable. Before adding the last touches I shaved, and as Mr. Tym made a little dull of seeing in the small mirror, played barber to him also. This done I concluded to see what was going on above, and slipped out on deck. As I passed through the main cabin I glanced toward the señorita's berth, but the stir about there was over and the door closed. As I came out of the companion I found quite a company of the passengers assembled, and near them Mr. Hope and Doña Carmen.

Mr. Hope looked a little disturbed and anxious, and I had no sooner appeared than he broke off what he was saying and stood waiting for me.

I hastened my steps and came up, and as I did so the señorita turned and gave me a pleasant smile of welcome.

I took off my hat to her, fetching a swift glance with the act, and was instantly pleased and in a manner confused at the change in her. I had not sufficiently conceived what this restoration to her own proper dress and the shedding of her former unsuitable and shabby clothes was to mean. There was no more of the rather undersized-looking figure,

the great flapping hat, with the old jacket, smalls and stuffed jack-boots, but instead a nobly grown woman, elegant in a silk gown, delicate laces, and a charmingly-draped mantilla.

Yet all this was only for a moment. I paid my respects—I know not whether with a little show of confusion—to Doña Carmen, and turned immediately to Mr. Hope.

"Well, sir," he began, "we have concluded to 'bout ship. I presume you have no further use for your sloop, and if so it will be a convenience to cast her off."

"Do so," said I. "We are done with her and she is not worth hoisting aboard. But whither do you now purpose to go?"

"To Valparaiso, as we think," he answered. "At first we had a mind to try some port hereabouts, but with the buccaneers so near it seemed too dangerous."

"I believe you are wise," said I. "Morgan has some ships, and there is no knowing how far he will cruise."

"Then the sooner we get upon the opposite course the better. I but delayed to get this further knowledge." He turned to Captain Telatrava and bade him put the ship about.

While they were doing this I moved over by Doña Carmen, and, though I was not sure Mr. Hope would approve, ventured to engage her in a little talk. I suppose I may as well admit at this point that I had come to find very keen delight in the señorita's company, and, though I had not plumped the matter in so many words even to myself, was most certainly

in love with her. That this was great presumption on my part, and stood fair to end in nothing but wretchedness and disappointment, was easy to perceive, but even so I was none the less eager to go on and enjoy the dangerous delight while I could.

I do not recall just what our discourse on this occasion was. I think it was at first about the probable length of the voyage and the ease and security of the ship, with the sharp contrast to the discomfort of the boat, and of the wonderful way the various circumstances had brought about the present situation. There was some talk of what my companions and I meant to do at the end of the voyage, and a remark on her part that she should suppose we could not endure to go to sea again after the recent perils, and then a hearty little breaking out that at least we could not go at once, for she should claim us as her guests as long as in possibility she could. In all I suppose we may have talked ten minutes, though it seemed less than half as long, but then Mr. Hope wound up his other matters and returned to his place.

He showed no displeasure at our *tête-à-tete*, and engaged me for a while in talk, though he did not again leave me alone with his niece. The rest of the day passed uneventfully, and at an early hour my companions and I turned in. The following morning everything was going well, and I began to relax at last from the strain of the late adventures. It seemed as though the voyage would be finished in peace, and that I was done with my strange succession of hazards and misfortunes. That day nothing

worth setting down happened, and I may say, to be brief, that the week closed in the same quiet fashion. One little incident I ought perhaps to except, and that the readier because it was a relief from the harsh and serious nature of the late occurrences. The ship's cook, a lazy and slovenly Portuguese, was taken ill, and Captain Telatrava, who was dissatisfied with the fellow from the first, prevailed upon Mac Ivrach to take his place. So well did Donald acquit himself that Mr. Hope, who was something of a good liver, shortly made a generous offer to take the Scotchman into his own service, which was promptly and with much gratitude accepted. We congratulated our old comrade heartily on his good luck, which pleased us, I might say, almost as much as it did him, and was most excellently well deserved.

Of course, during the few days I have mentioned, I saw considerable of the señorita. It was her custom to come pretty early on deck, and remain until the heat became troublesome, and again she came out about the beginning of the dog watches, or even sooner, sitting under a tilt, or in the space on the shady side of the poop-deck house. Mr. Hope was with her the chief part of the time, and on other occasions was never long absent; but though this (to be frank) was not just to my fancy, I could not find fault, for the merchant treated me with invariable kindness.

One evening, soon after two bells had been struck, I came on deck and saw Doña Carmen standing by herself near the after weather gang-port. My heart gave a bound, for it was not often that I found her alone at this hour, and with a glance

about, to make sure that I was indeed so fortunate, I walked over to her.

"A beautiful evening," I began, taking care to speak in my usual tone.

She turned quickly, putting back a falling end of her mantilla, and smiled.

"So it is you, señor? Indeed it is beautiful. I was just considering whether I would not fetch a chair to this open port and enjoy the view for a little."

"You could not pass the time better, and with your leave I will keep you company," I answered boldly, yet with affected lightness.

With which, only staying for her consenting nod, I fetched two bamboo chairs, and seated her in one while I took the other.

"This is the recompense of these hot days—the wonderful nights," she said, with a comfortable settling of her head against the back of her chair. "What a sky, Señor Ardick, and what a sea!"

I followed her glance up at the heavens and out through the open port.

"Glorious!" I answered.

"It seems as though I could be content to have it go on forever," she said with a sigh. "It is all so peaceful and restful."

"I can see how you feel so," I said, sighing a little in turn. "Yet pretty shortly you would tire of it and desire to be back in the stir and bustle of the world."

"Ah," she said with a sad shake of the head, "you forget how little I have to go back to, señor. Rather I begin in a new world. I do not desire it,

and in all earnestness prefer this peace and content."

"Which I am glad to hear you say," said I, my pulse taking the foolish freak to beat faster. "It is my own thought, to own the truth. Like you, I am satisfied to be here, and would be glad never to return to the world. There it must be the old strife and disappointment, and the parting of friends!"

"And yet," she said with a regretful lowering of the voice "it is thus that it will happen. The voyage must end, and our pleasant dream fade to naught."

"Doña Carmen," said I—the words seemed to come from my lips with a leap, as it were, and almost of their own accord—"our dream must end like other dreams unless we make it a reality. I mean"—for one instant I halted, and hung frightened over the abyss of my own presumption—"I mean we may make the chiefest thing in the dream come true, for we can refuse to be separated—God help me! I think I am mad! How dare I say this to you? And yet it is true. I love you—love you with my whole heart and soul. And now it is out, and I think I shall presently be the miserablest man in the world!"

The last atom of my courage left me, and I turned my face from her and stared through the open port.

It seemed an age before she answered. With a mechanical sort of hearing I followed the low wash of the water along the sides of the ship, the straining of the timbers and bulkheads, and the clicking of gear in the blocks.

At last her chair moved, and to my amaze I felt the weight of her hand on my arm. I swelled in a great breath—coward it may be I was—and all a-tremble turned to her. She was fixing grave and shining eyes on me.

"Carlos," she began—oh, the sweetness of the Spanish tongue!—"is this indeed how it is with you? Holy Mother forgive me if I am indiscreet, but it is thus with me also. I shall be the most wretched creature in the world if I have to part from you!"

I have cast about for words wherewith to explain what I felt on hearing this, but to no purpose. I am persuaded there are no such, either in this or in any other language. But, in short, I could have cried out with rapture, and what I could not be restrained from doing was to seize the hand that lay on my arm and between affection and pure adoration bow over it and hold it to my lips. She drew it away at last, perhaps fearing that some chance passer might see us, but flashed the sweetest smile back as a ransom for it.

What I said next I can not tell, for all was in a whirl with me, and I warrant I was scarce intelligible. There were murmurs to and fro, and at last—I am not clear how—I recovered some measure of my senses.

"Well, dearest," I said with a sigh, "I suppose there are practical matters standing now to be settled. By what plan am I to make you mine, now that I have won you? What will avail to remove the obstacles, including the chief one, which must be the opposition of your uncle? Not that he shall pre-

vail against my love," I added sternly. "Nay, not forty uncles, nor the world! So much is settled, please God!"

She seemed to be a little frightened at my earnestness, and yet I could see that my desperateness of resolve pleased her.

"Why, *Carlos mío*," she answered with a charming frown of thought, "I am not clear as to the way. I fear that my uncle would never consent, and though I love you—*sí, Carlos*, with all my heart—I would not, save in a thing of extremity, disobey him."

"But you would not let him part us?" I cried, trembling with fear and jealous dread.

"Not if with right and honour it can be compassed otherwise," she answered gently. "Nay, dear heart, mitigate your fears. At least I will never consent to wed any one but you, and I am sure that my uncle is no such man as to compel me. That will give us time, and with time who can say what may not be done?"

"Angel!" I cried rapturously, and I was scarce able to keep back from snatching her into my arms. Perhaps the passing by of one of the sailors at the moment was the only thing that prevented me.

"But, Carlos, there is yet another way," she went on. "Say you should boldly seek my uncle and ask him? You could do no more than fail."

"But I should do that," I said despondently. "Ah, well, nevertheless I will try it; I will urge him. I will plead my cause. I will ask but for time to prove my worthiness and a mete place in the world. Content you. So he comes on deck I will have my answer this night."

She heard me gravely and as one troubled with doubts, but yet of my mind. Indeed, this was but the putting into words of her own thought.

"Content, then," she replied at last. "Ah," she added, turning her head and starting, "here he comes! Our Blessed Mother and every saint prosper you!"

She was up and moving across the deck before I had my surprise well mastered. Truly enough, Mr. Hope was coming toward us, having just stepped out of the companion.

I confess that the boldness I had shown but a moment before wonderfully diminished now that the moment of action was at hand. Carmen gone and Mr. Hope present was quite another thing from the reverse.

Still, I had, of course, no thought of hesitating, and I summoned my resolution afresh and made toward him.

"A fine night," he observed, not quite heartily, as I thought. I guessed that he was not overpleased at finding Doña Carmen and me together. It was the first time it had fallen out in just this way—that is, that we had been by ourselves of an evening.

"It could not well be finer," I answered. By this time my courage had a bit revived.

He came up to me, and with an air grave and sober I went on:

"With your permission I have something to say to you. Have you leisure to give me a few minutes of your time?"

This was a business sort of proposition that at once changed his bearing. He answered with

urbanity that he was quite at my service, and led the way to the part of the deck I had just quitted. Making a sign for me to take one of the chairs, he dropped into the other and planted his feet comfortably against the gang-port chain.

"Proceed, if you please," he said, turning his head a bit so as to regard me.

Again a kind of cold fit took me. This alert merchant way of his put me out, and then I had a growing sense of what there was at stake. I hung in the wind an instant, but in that time managed to confirm my resolution once more.

"The business, sir," I began with a sort of desperate bluntness, "concerns your niece. I presume some deprecation of my boldness may be in order, but yet I choose rather to come at once to the heart of the matter. In a word, I love her, and she has avowed she loves me. It lacks but your consent to wed her."

I was not surprised that Mr. Hope's feet came down from the chain, and that he stiffened up and looked at me with a clouded countenance. I faced him steadfastly.

"This is a sort of business I was not expecting," he said in a cold and yet well-mastered voice. "May I ask if you have considered all that goes with your proposition?"

"As what, sir?" said I, apprehending well enough what he meant, yet wishing to draw him out.

"I had thought better of your understanding," he said, speaking now with the harshness he had concealed before. "What should I mean but the proof of your fitness for the match? In a word, what for-

tune have you, and what are your other qualifications that I should consider you?"

"That," I said, never flinching, "I can as yet return but an indifferent answer to. I mean from what I conceive is your standpoint. My personal character I may say is all you can ask for. As to fortune, I have none, and no better than fair prospects. I mean to follow the sea, at least, for a time, and trust by and by to come to the command of a ship, the which should not be such a poor attainment. My father was a sailor," I went on, "and rose to be a master and owned three parts of his ship. I trust with sobriety and diligence to do as much."

He puffed out his lips, somewhat in Mr. Tym's fashion, and squared about to his former posture. I thought my undauntedness and straightforwardness had at least shaken him.

He finally answered, his voice at least lowered from the first harsh pitch.

"But granting this, what then? At best your plan requires considerable time."

"That I admit," I said reluctantly. "It could not well be compassed under a few years."

"And meanwhile my niece might lose a desirable match. Come, I would not be unreasonable. You seem a likely enough fellow, and all I have heard of you commends you, yet notwithstanding I can not now concede what you wish. Go on and achieve the things you speak of, if you can, and then we will see what is to be said. Further than this I will not promise. Indeed, I have gone beyond my first intent in yielding so much. But it must be understood that there is to be no more love-making. I shall have my

eyes open—which it seems hitherto I have not, or have been overpassed—and all infringement I shall meet by strict measures. Now you have my answer, which I have meant should be to the point, as is my custom."

He ended with a little more severity than he had began, yet not harshly, and seemed to await my answer.

In good sooth, I could not find much fault. He had not given me the sort of reply I could have wished, to be sure, and I did not go to the length of finding much encouragement in his generalities; yet, on the other hand, he had not flatly refused me, and he had not treated my suit with contempt. I perceived that it stood me in hand to meet him in the prompt and frank fashion he seemed to look for, and hence I nodded in a satisfied way and answered:

"I can ask nothing more. I am aware that the greatness of what I seek is beyond my deserts. Let it stand as it is, then. You do not positively refuse me, and I have my own success to work out. I am beholden to you, sir, for your consideration."

"Why, you are welcome," he answered quite genially. "And, Master Ardick," he went on, as I rose and made to go, "I would say that I wish to stand your friend. I have very keenly in mind the obligation you have placed me under—you and your companions. I trust at no distant day to be able to repay some small share of the debt."

"I thank you in turn," I said rather coldly, "but in the present hospitality you repay all that I, at least, can accept. I wish you good-night."

And with a well-managed bit of loftiness (albeit my heart was heavy) I turned and stalked over to the companion.

"Master Ardick!" he called after me, to my surprise.

"Aye, sir," I responded, wheeling instantly, my pulse suddenly quickened.

"Mentioning your companions suggests another matter. Do you recall that I once asked you whence they hailed?"

"I do," I answered, considerably disappointed. I had expected something to another purpose.

"And you said that Mr. Tym and the captain were from Southampton and Mac Ivrach from Glasgow? I am asking merely to be sure I understood you."

"You are a little estray," I answered, my silly irritation passing; "only the captain is from Southampton. Mr. Tym, though he has of late lived in London—that is, when not at sea—was born and reared in some town in Sussex."

"Is it so?" he said with a little surprise. "Then I misapprehended you. That alters the case. I must see Mr. Tym. I will explain to you that the business concerns the letter that Captain Sellinger brought. This letter was from a dear friend of mine, now dead, and is of very much importance. It was written in New York, where my friend lived, and came to me in the strange and roundabout way you know of. Among other things, I must now get upon the track of a certain family of Sussex. If you are about to go below will you not ask Mr. Tym to step up hither?"

"Certainly," I answered, and with a slight distraction from my own matters for the moment, I wished him good-night and left the deck.

CHAPTER XXXII.

OF THE DETERMINATION OF THE WHOLE MATTER.

But once dived down into the quiet (none of the passengers were in sight), the concern and trouble of the old matter returned. The prospect came back, dubious and uncertain, and the pride which had sustained me so well till now incontinently left me. I made forward with heavy feet, and only pulled myself together at the door of the berth, where I took thought that Mr. Tym might notice me. I entered and found him up and already about to go on deck, and delivered Mr. Hope's message. He replied, "Very well," and after finding that I was not for going back passed out, and I heard him ascend the brass-shod stairs.

I might now momentarily see my love, which I was bound to do, and tell her how matters had gone, and, besides—well, I hoped for a fleeting embrace. Most likely it would be our first and last.

I slipped out into the main cabin, accordingly, running my eye about under the dim, grease-smelling lamps, but again finding the place empty, and stole along to the señorita's door.

At my first light knock she opened it. She was habited as she left the deck, even to the mantilla.

Her face was pale, and her eyes seemed big and bright, showing the strain of her anxiety.

"He makes little of me, yet has not absolutely refused me," I hastily whispered.

"Oh, then there is hope!" she cried, tingeing instantly with colour and clasping her hands. "He did not despise you?"

"Nay," I answered, trembling with love and tenderness, "not so bad as that."

I could not find it in my heart to disclose the doubts and dubiousness that were oppressing me.

"But yet you speak heavily," she said, looking at me more narrowly, "and there is that in your air—— What were his words, Carlos?"

"That he bids me rise to a station in life fit to sue for you," I was now pressed to answer; "but even then promises nothing. In short, he treated me with civility, and perhaps beyond my deserts, but has left me with near as many doubts as I had at first. And yet——"

"Poor Carlos!" she gently broke in, and to my infinite delight she laid her hand gently against my cheek. "I perceive how it is. He has played the shrewd merchant with you, and has dealt with you in a fashion to avoid offence, yet to afford little hope. But be not discouraged, for if he did not come out with harshness against you he is not offended with you, and that I am sure is much. I am now better heartened than I have been at any time before, and believe that all will yet come out in triumph for us."

"Dear heart!" said I with a shaking voice, and unable to utter any more words I clapped the ca-

ressing hand to my lips and with another motion drew her unresisting to my breast.

God wot never was a purer woman, but she was no prude, and the generous blood of Spain flowed in her veins. She slipped her arms about my neck and put her lips to mine, and let me draw her loving weight to me, and so we clung for a single moment.

The shortest moment in my life. Feet began to clatter down the companion stairs, and with one swift, tender kiss and "I am yours, Carlos, or if not, then the veil! The Holy One keep you!" she was inside and the door closed, and I was speeding to my cabin.

I reached the door just as the person coming down fetched into the range of the lamps. To my relief it was Mr. Tym. Nevertheless, I had never seen him when he was less welcome.

"Is't you, Ardick?" he asked, as I paused by the door. "Why, yes, now I see it is. Come in, for I have a thing to tell you."

I felt little curiosity, for the greater matter moved me, but I passed after him into the berth. Our candle lanthorn had been left burning, and by the glimmer of it I saw that his look was moved and excited. A little surprised now, I dropped upon the side of my bunk, while he took the neighbour stool.

"Well, Ardick," he began, "to save you guessing, I will go straight to the bowels of the matter. I have fallen heir to a great fortune."

Distraught as I was and full of the other affair, this, nevertheless, gave me a start. Recollecting

myself and how I ought to behave toward one who had deserved so well of me, I caught his hand and shook it heartily.

"I congratulate you, with all my soul," I cried. "No man in the world deserves the luck better!"

"Avast! you over-exalt me," he laughed. "But it is the strangest thing in the world. To come to the point, then, it is Torrycorn's letter which has brought so much to pass. First, a certain cousin, that I never saw, died, and left me his entire great possessions. He did it out of regard for my mother, it seems, whom he greatly loved. While dying he wrote a letter to Mr. Hope, his dear friend and business agent, begging that he be executor of the will, and sent the letter to a sea captain, who was soon to sail for Havana. By mistake the letter went to Captain Torrycorn, and soon after Mr. Hope himself sailed for Panama. Having considerable business on the way he was deterred from the first plan of his voyage, and reached this point later than he had expected. Yet still he did arrive in precise season to meet us, to receive his letter, and to find at his very elbow the man the letter concerned. Shall you find the match of all this for strangeness and the very whim of fortune?"

"Indeed," said I, much surprised, "it passes all that I ever heard of. But what is the amount of the fortune?"

"It is set forth in the letter to be ninety thousand pounds sterling, but may fall something short," he answered. "It is mainly invested in lands about New York and in ships. It was in the business of the last that my cousin made his fortune. I mean

in the plantation trade. It is a bit strange that I never heard of him, but then his ships plied mostly between our easterly ports and New York, and I had no great knowledge of matters in those parts."

But here something gave me a little start. "Ships, then," said I, "will cut a considerable figure with you. Do you mean to keep them or sell them?"

"That I can answer better when I see them, and likewise come to some determination as to the other property," he answered. "But it may be I apprehend you. You would like to bespeak a berth?"

"It seems hasty and eager to mention it," I replied, a little in deprecation, "but the fact is——"

"Say no more," he cried, clapping me on the back. "Can you doubt me? Why, man, you shall be second mate of my best ship. After that mate, and then captain. Why not? And your pay shall start with a round sum, and I not cheated, either, for you are worth it. Sellinger at first shall be your superior—for I have him also in mind, to advance his fortunes—and I think you could not ask for a better."

"God bless you!" I cried. "This is more than you think!"

In spite of me the tears came into my eyes.

"Why, Ardick, man, you have something behind the lighter!" he said, looking at me sharply. "Nay, out with it and relieve your mind. I much doubt if you will find more sympathetic ears."

"That I know," I said with a sob, "but, indeed, I am but a poor creature. I think I have lost the

little courage I had. Yet here is the matter, since you are foolish enough to consent to hear it." And with no words spared and many flounderings and pullings up I disclosed my secret.

"And now," said I at the end, "you see how the matter lies. To come speedily as may be to my ship is my only hope, and even then—who can say what may intervene?"

He heard me with an inscrutable face, only I thought his eye lighted once or twice, and once he was at his old trick of thrusting out his lips.

"And so," he said with an odd kind of precision, "that is the thing behind the lighter? A stirring enough little matter, too, but not calling for much dwelling on."

"Sir!" I cried reproachfully.

"Nay, but hear me," he said waving his hand. "Eight-and-twenty years ago I was young and was in love. I thought as you did, and was intoxicated in the same fashion. I married after a time."

I was silent. I thought I knew what he was about to say. His marriage had proved unhappy.

"In two years my wife died," he went on, his voice dropping and sobering. "Those two years were happier than all the time before or since. When it came to the last I asked Margaret to thank God for me that he had given me the sweet loan of her. I promised that I would strive to join her some day, notwithstanding my many imperfections, which still I mean to do, yet in chief through the merits of Christ, blessed be his name! for he must make up my lack. And now to your matter, which you must think I have strayed from. Having been in this way

happy myself, I conceive it a good and sweet thing if I might make you so likewise, and this I believe I can do. I have now neither kith nor kin—poor George Benther was surely the last, as I thought another was before him—and it will be fitting if I name an heir. Why not you, Ardick, whom in truth I love? I will adopt you, and so at last I shall have a son. And now do you think your matter worth much dwelling on, for have we not found a way to mend it? I trow my heir and the agent of my ships, with good ventures of his own and what not, may aspire to this young woman's hand? If not, let me know, and we will see whether the house of Reginald Tym has forgotten how to uphold its honour by the sword!"

Long before the end of this epilogue, which indeed the good man spoke with the water standing in his eyes, I had seized his hand and with trembling lips had kissed it.

He broke off with this, standing up and clapping on his hat.

"Yet wait a little, for, after all, the business is not quite concluded. I would see Mr. Hope."

He retreated out of the berth, and with feelings which you may guess, but which I can not hope to put into words, I dropped down on the side of the bunk and awaited his return.

He was gone above twenty minutes. When he came in he made a grave bow and pointed to my hat.

I laughingly and yet in a great tremble clapped it on, which done, he took my arm and led me out and up the companion stairs.

Near the top he only said:

"The lady is on deck. Why there I can not say, unless it might be to greet a certain person. But in any event she is in my way. I wish to have a further talk with her uncle. Therefore you will oblige me by conducting her one side, and I recommend the after part of the quarter-deck, on the larboard side, which is in shadow."

THE END.